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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 13 FEBRUARY 2026 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU | 24 SHABAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 37 | Pages: 8

— PTI

BJP MLA Byrathi arrested at KIA in murder case

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Karnataka BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj was arrested on Thursday at the Kempegowda International Airport here in connection with a murder case soon after he arrived from Ahmedabad, police sources said. The police team waiting for his arrival at Terminal-1 took him into custody. The KR Puram MLA's arrest comes hours after the Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea filed by him challenging the Karnataka High Court order denying him anticipatory bail in the murder of a history-sheeter-turned-realtor. *—PTI*

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WB nurse dies of cardiac arrest post recovery from Nipah

KOLKATA, 12 FEB

A 25-year-old nurse who had recovered from Nipah virus infection died of cardiac arrest on Thursday at a private hospital at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. She had been taken off ventilator support at the end of January. The woman was one of two health workers in the state who tested positive for Nipah. The other, a male nurse, had recovered. The deceased, a resident of Katwa in Purba Bardhaman district, had been in a prolonged coma, which severely weakened her immunity. She also developed a lung infection and contracted a hospital-acquired infection during treatment. *—PTI*

Change title or face no release: SC raps 'Ghooskhor Pandat'

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice to the makers of the Netflix film 'Ghooskhor Pandat', starring Manoj Bajpayee, over its allegedly "casteist" title. The top and warned that the movie will not be allowed to release unless its name is changed. A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, hearing a PIL seeking a stay on the film's release, directed filmmaker Neeraj Pandey to inform the court of the new title and file an affidavit stating that the film does not denigrate any section of society. *—PTI*

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Lamborghini crash accused arrested, gets bail in hours

KANPUR, 12 FEB

Shivam Mishra, son of tobacco baron KK Mishra, was granted bail on Thursday hours after his arrest in a Lamborghini crash on VIP Road that injured six people. Produced before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate at 10 am, Mishra was released after furnishing a Rs 20,000 bail bond. The court rejected police pleas for remand, citing procedural lapses and Supreme Court guidelines. Defence counsel argued Mishra was not driving and highlighted offences carried less than seven years' punishment. Mishra assured cooperation, pledging not to tamper with evidence. *—PTI*

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Govt releases new CPI series; Jan retail inflation at 2.75%

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Retail inflation stood at 2.75 per cent in January under the new series of All India Consumer Price Index (CPI), with 2024 as the base year, released on Thursday by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

The revised CPI basket expands coverage, increasing the number of goods from 259 to 308 and services from 40 to 50 to provide a better picture of the prices.

Food inflation in January was 2.13 per cent, and housing stood at 2.05 per cent.

Under the previous 2012 base series, retail inflation was 4.26 per cent in January 2025 and 1.33 in December. Rural headline inflation in January was 2.73 per cent and in urban India 2.77 per cent. Telangana had the highest inflation at 4.92 per cent, followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Items with low inflation were garlic, onion, potato, tur dal; those with high inflation were silver jewellery, tomato, coconut, gold, diamond.

Base was revised from 2012 to 2024 using Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023-24. New additions include rural housing, streaming services, value-added dairy products, pendrive and external hard disk, babysitter, and exercise equipment. It removed VCR/VCD/DVD players, radio, tape recorder, among others.

The share of food and beverages has declined to 36.75 per cent, though it remains the largest CPI component. *—PTI*

Govt gives nod to buy 114 Rafale jets at Rs 3.6 lakh cr

The approval comes just days ahead of Macron's visit to India

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India has approved its largest-ever defence acquisition, clearing the long-pending procurement of 114 Rafale fighter jets from France under a government-to-government framework, nearly two decades after the plan was first proposed. The Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, also sanctioned capital acquisitions worth Rs 3.60 lakh crore, including six additional United States-made Boeing P8-I long-range maritime patrol and anti-submarine aircraft for the Indian Navy.

Under the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft project, 18 Rafales will be delivered in fly-away condition by Dassault Aviation, while the remainder will be manufactured in India with over 50 per cent indigenous content phased in over time. The procurement cost is expected to range from Rs 2.90 lakh crore to Rs 3.15 lakh crore. The approval comes just days ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India, with a potential inter-governmental pact on the deal expected during the trip. Final contract negotiations, including the weapons package, are likely to extend into the year.

The Rafales, which played a significant role in Operation Sindoor, will be equipped with European MBDA Meteor beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles and Scalp cruise missiles, enhancing the Indian Air Force's air dominance and long-range strike capability. The acquisition addresses declining squadron strength, which has fallen to 31 from the officially sanctioned 42.

Alongside the Rafales, the Defence Acquisition Council approved anti-tank Vibhav mines and overhaul of T-72 tanks, BMP-II infantry combat vehicles, and Armoured Recovery Vehicles for the Indian Army; and four-megawatt marine gas turbine generators and P8-I aircraft for the Navy. *—PTI*

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in Rajya Sabha in New Delhi on Thursday *—PTI*

FM: High I-T doesn't suppress middle class

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

High personal income tax collection does not mean that the middle class is being suppressed, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday in the Rajya Sabha.

There is no evidence of any suppression of the middle class in the country, but there is evidence of middle-class expansion, she said while replying to a debate on the Union Budget 2026-27.

Replying to the opposition allegation that the middle class is being sandwiched between the rich and the poor, Sitharaman said it appears so because personal income tax collections exceeded corporate tax. "There is no evidence of middle-class suppression. Actually, there is enough evidence of middle-class expansion driven by the economic reforms in the last 10 years. High personal income tax collection does not mean the middle class is being crushed," she said. There are more people today with income that is taxable, she said. *—PTI*

Chinnaswamy cleared to host RCB matches with crowd cap

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

In a boost for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) fans, the M Chinnaswamy Stadium has been cleared to host IPL and international matches after the Karnataka Cabinet granted permission to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA).

Defending champions RCB are now set to play their home fixtures at the Bengaluru venue in the upcoming IPL season, with the final call resting with the franchise. However, the approval comes with strict conditions. The government has capped attendance at 30,000–35,000 spectators, following last year's stampede during RCB's IPL title celebrations in which 11 people died and several were injured. Karnataka Minister Ramalinga Reddy said the decision was taken in line with recommendations in the Justice Cunha Committee report. "The cabinet agreed with certain conditions as per the Cunha report... a maximum of 35,000 people, and some other conditions," he told reporters.

International matches had been barred at the venue after the tragedy, with Women's World Cup 2025 fixtures shifted to Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium. KSCA, led by Venkatesh Prasad, and RCB had pushed for resumption in recent months, culminating in Thursday's decision. *—Agencies*

Hasina tears into Yunus as B'desh votes

DHAKA, 12 FEB

As Bangladesh cast its vote on Thursday in the first election since Sheikh Hasina's ouster in 2024, the former prime minister denounced the elections as a "farce".

The counting of votes was underway at the time of publishing. Nearly 127 million voters were registered to cast their ballots, including 5 million first-time voters. Voting concluded at 4.30pm (local time) across the 42,779 polling centres in 299 out of 300 constituencies nationwide. The Election Commission said it recorded a 48 per cent voter turnout at 2pm.

With her Awami League banned by the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, Hasina stated: "The people's voting rights, democratic values, and the spirit of the Constitution were completely disregarded."

"From the evening of 11 February, this farce began with seizure of polling centres, gunfire, vote-buying, distribution of money, stamping of ballots, and agents signing result sheets," she alleged. The election is a contest between the centre-Right BNP's Tarique Rahman and the Far-Right alliance headed by Jamaat-e-Islami's Shafiqur Rahman. *—PTI*

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US TRADE DEAL REMARKS

BJP files notice to oust RaGa from LS

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Thursday said he has given a notice to initiate a 'substantive motion' against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, seeking cancellation of his Lok Sabha membership and a lifetime ban on contesting elections.

Speaking to PTI videos, Dubey said he has stated how the Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition "colludes" with anti-India elements such as the Soros Foundation.

A substantive motion is an independent proposal submitted for the approval of a legislative house or assembly, drafted to express a decision.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned as Opposition protested against Dubey.

Responding, Gandhi said the government was free to file cases or move a privilege motion but he would continue to stand with farmers. He said "anti-farmer" Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "selling" the country through the India-US interim trade deal.

Gandhi on Wednesday also questioned why industrialist Anil Ambani had not been jailed despite being named in the Jeffrey Epstein files, which he claimed also mention Union minister Hardeep Puri. He alleged US pressure on India during the nuclear deal amid ongoing legal issues involving Adani. In a video on X, Gandhi said, "He (Modi) has sold cotton, soya, apple and fruit farmers and will open the agriculture market for his friends like Adani, Ambani.... American farmers have farm lands that are in acres, it is all mechanised and the government gives them subsidy. On the other hand, the farms of our farmers are small, they don't get MSP and there is no mechanisation. This means that American farmers will benefit, while Indians will suffer." *—Agencies*

Trade Unions protesting Labour Codes detained in City

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Thousands of trade union activists and workers were detained by Bengaluru police during a Bandh on Wednesday, as protests intensified against the Union government's four new la-bour codes. Hundreds gathered at Town Hall demanding repeal of the codes, alleging they weaken labour rights, job security and social protection.

Police removed nearly 10 busloads of workers from the area, shifting detainees to Freedom Park, Adugodi and other police grounds to continue demonstrations under supervision. BMTC passengers were reportedly forced off buses so vehicles could be used to transport protesters. Traffic in central Bengaluru was disrupted amid heavy deployment.

The strike was led by a joint forum of central trade unions including CITU, INTUC, AITUC and KITU. Industrial hubs such as Peenya, Jigani, Whitefield and Bommasandra also saw worker processions and factory disruptions.

CPI(ML) Liberation leader Clifton D'Rozario criticised the Karnataka government, accusing it of repressing the right to protest. *—Salar News*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 4

2023 HORROR

Kin of Indian girl killed by US cop get ₹ 260 cr relief

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Seattle has reached a $29 million (roughly Rs 262 crore) settlement with the family of a 23-year-old student from India who was struck by a speeding police officer in 2023.

Jaahnavi Kandula was hit by Officer Kevin Dave, who was driving as fast as 74 mph (119 kph) to respond to a drug overdose call. He had his emergency lights on and had been using his siren at intersections.

Kandula had been pursuing a master's degree in information systems at the Seattle campus of Northeastern University.

Attorneys for Kandula's family filed a notice of settlement in King County Superior Court on 8 February, local news website PubliCola reported.

Kandula's death sparked outrage and demonstrations, after a recording from another officer's body camera showed him laughing and suggesting Kandula's life was of little and the city should "just write a check."

Diplomats from India sought an investigation. The city's civilian watchdog found officer Daniel Auderer's comments damaged the department's reputation and undermined public trust. Auderer was later fired and has sued the city for wrongful termination. *—PTI*

Will not allow anyone to touch Aravalli, says SC

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it will not allow "anyone to touch the Aravallis", refusing to permit the Haryana government to submit a detailed plan on jungle safari.

Highlighting the need for a definition of 'Aravalli range' by experts, the apex court said that the issue of jungle safari will be dealt with when it considers the main matter on the range.

Counsel for Haryana said that they have revised the detailed project report (DPR) of the safari project from 10,000 acres to over 3,300 acres.

The court said that the Aravalli is not only of Haryana or Rajasthan but it is a range which traverses many states.

In October 2025, the top court stalled the Haryana government's 'Aravali Zoo Safari project', which aims to set up big cat zones and house hundreds of species of birdsin an area of 10,000 acres in the Aravalli ranges. *—PTI*

Budget Session to run from 6 March to 27 March: Patil

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The Budget Session of the Karnataka Legislature will begin on 6 March and conclude on 27 March, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said after a Cabinet meeting on Thursday. He said the Cabinet approved the session. The 14-day session will be Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's record 17th budget, as he also holds the finance portfolio.—*PTI*

Customs seize Rs 3.43cr of ganja at KIA

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Bengaluru Customs officials at Kempegowda International Airport have seized narcotics worth more than Rs 3.43 crore and arrested two passengers in separate incidents. In the first case, a passenger arriving from Bangkok was intercepted with 9.7 kg of hydroponic anja, valued at Rs 3.39 crore, concealed in checked-in luggage. On the same day, another passenger from Bangkok was found carrying 1.7 kg of hashish/charas, worth Rs 4.25 lakh, hidden inside candy packets. Both have been arrested. —*PTI*

Class 10 student dies by suicide in Bidar

BIDAR, 12 FEB

A 16-year-old Class 10 student, Sharath, son of Parameshwar from Manthala village, allegedly died by suicide at the Navodaya Hostel in Narayanpur village, Basavakalyan taluk, Bidar district. He was found dead in his hostel room late at night. A suicide note recovered at the scene read: "SORRY Mummy, Papa... I love you" and "Keep smile forever". The reason behind the tragedy remains unknown. Basavakalyan Town Station police are investigating. —*SALAR NEWS*

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3 cops suspended after attacking cashier at KIA

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

Three policemen were suspended for allegedly assaulting a staff member at a coffee stall inside Kempegowda International Airport after the latter asked them to pay for their coffee, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred on Wednesday evening, and a video purportedly showing the assault has gone viral. An FIR has also been registered against Constable Gangaraju and two colleagues on duty. —*PTI*

Make Centre implement MSP law, SKM tells Siddaramaiah

Calls for increase in FRP, better land acquisition enumeration

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The SKM on Thursday urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru to press the Centre to fulfill what it termed the "most important demands of farmers".

Among its key demands, the SKM called for the enactment of a law guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops and full procurement from all farmers a farm loan waiver and a climate compensation policy.

A delegation led by Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) convener Jagjit Singh Dallewal and co-convener Kurubara Shanta Kumar met Siddaramaiah at his office in Bengaluru. They submitted a memorandum to him.

In the memorandum, the SKM raised concerns over agrarian distress and called for immediate policy interventions at the national level.

"The agricultural sector has been neglected by consecutive governments for a long time, forcing more than 4,00,000 farmers to die by suicide," the memorandum said.

"We would like to request you to press the Central Government to fulfil the following demands to improve the agricultural sector and secure the future of farmers," the body wrote.

Citing a past recommendation, it noted that to protect farmers' interests, statutory provisions should be made to ensure that any transactions between farmers and buyers related to crop purchases do not fall below the MSP declared by the government.

The SKM also demanded the implementation of the MS Swaminathan Commission's formula, under which the MSP should be fixed at 1.5 times the cost of production incurred by farmers.

It further sought a complete waiver of farm loans, the re-enactment of the 2013 Land Acquisition Act provisions ensuring farmers' consent and enhanced compensation, and a higher Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of at least Rs 600 per quintal for sugarcane with time-bound payments.

On climate-related distress, the Morcha said the government must compensate farmers for losses due to increasing droughts and floods and undertake comprehensive reforms of the crop insurance scheme to make it more farmer-friendly. It also demanded fair compensation for land affected by high-tension transmission lines and insisted that no provisions concerning farmers in the Seed Bill and the Electricity Amendment Bill be implemented without broad consent. —*PTI*

Chief Minister SIddaramaiah meets Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) conener Jagjit Singh Dallewal (third from left) Kurubara Shanta Kumar (second from left) in Bengaluru, on Thursday —*X @SIDDARAMAIAH*

AGAINST LABOUR CODES

People in Bengaluru from various trade unions protest as part of the nationwide genral strike on Thursday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

TU strike gets mixed response in State

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The traders' strike called by workers on Thursday evoked a mixed response in Karnataka, with normal life largely unaffected in several regions. However, protests were reported statewide.

In Kolar district, the bandh had minimal impact barring a few major centres. KSRTC and private buses, autorickshaws and other transport services operated normally.

Industries in Narasapur and Vemagal functioned as usual, and most business establishments, including restaurants, remained open.

However, KGF and Bangarpet saw partial shutdowns, with some shops closed.

Addressing protesters in Bangarpet, R Prabhakar of All India Central Council of Trade Unions criticised the Centre for scrapping nearly 29 labour laws and replacing them with four labour codes, alleging they jeopardise workers' rights.

He demanded re-establishment of the Construction Welfare Board and reintroduction of the Construction Workers' Act, 1997, claiming nearly 8 crore construction workers and their families have been denied welfare benefits.

He also termed demonetisation and GST detrimental to the workforce.

Workers rallies in Vijayanagar and Sakleshpur, while mid-day meal and construction workers demonstrated in Bantwal. Women workers in in Mysuru, All India Agricultural and Rural Labour Association activists in Raichur, and mine workers in Ballari also held rallies demanding repeal of the four labour codes. —*Salar News*

AFTER SC JUNKS PLEA

BJP MLA Byrathi arrested at KIA in murder case

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj was arrested on Thursday at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru in connection with a murder case soon after he arrived from Ahmedabad, police sources said. The police team waiting for his arrival at Terminal-1 took him into custody.

The KR Puram MLA's arrest came hours after the Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea filed by him seeking anticipatory bail. He had challeneged the Karnataka High Court order which also denied him the same.

The case pertains to the murder of Shivaprakash alias Biklu Shivu, 40, a history-sheeter-turned-realtor. He was hacked to death at Bharathi Nagar in the City on 15 July, 2025 and Basavaraj was named as the fifth accused in the FIR.

According to police, the assailants arrived in a car and murdered Shivaprakash in front of his mother. Investigators said the murder was triggered by a long-simmering property dispute dating back to February 2025, involving rival claimants to land in the Kithaganur area.

When refusing to entertain Basavaraj's plea, the Supreme Court told him to "be courageous".

However, it allowed him to seek regular bail with the concerned High Court. —*PTI*

Karnataka revises FAR norms for industrial land, says MB Patil

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The Karnataka government on Thursday revised Floor Area Ratio (FAR) norms for industrial plots, aiming to make them more industry-friendly and promote growth in areas developed by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB). An official order has been issued.

Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil said the earlier norms allowed only 65 per cent land utilisation for industrial construction.

For instance, in a 10-acre plot, only about 6.5 acres could be built upon, with the rest reserved for parking and mandatory setbacks.

The revised norms increase permissible utilisation to 75 per cent, reducing land requirements and costs for entrepreneurs while helping retain more agricultural land with farmers.

Setback requirements have also been eased. For buildings up to seven metres high, only 1.5 metres in the front and 1 metre on either one side will now suffice.

For structures up to 15 metres, front setbacks have been rationalised to 2–6 metres and other sides to 1.5–6 metres.

The new rules allow up to 15 per cent of general industrial plots for residential facilities and 10 per cent in plots of at least 50 acres for residential and commercial use.

Parking requirements have been reduced to two per cent for general industries and data centres, and three per cent for warehousing and logistics units. —*Agencies*

Chargesheet filed in Bengaluru ATM heist

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The Bengaluru police have filed a charge sheet against nine accused, including a police constable, in the Rs 7.11 crore dacoity case, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Lokesh Jagalsar said on Thursday.

The case pertains to the high-profile armed robbery of Rs 7.11 crore from a cash logistics vehicle in Ashoka Pillar-Jayanagar Dairy Circle in the City on 19 November, 2025.

The charge sheet has been filed before the 56th ACMM CCH Court under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

The accused include multiple suspects arrested in phases during the investigation, with police constable, Annappa Naik attached to Govindapura Police Station allegedly aiding the execution and planning of the crime.

Jagalsar noted that the investigation team compiled a robust case file comprising 129 pieces of evidence to substantiate the charges, including statements from eyewitnesses, technical evidence and forensic material such as fingerprints identifying the accused.

He also lauded the investigating officer, ACP Jayanagar, and his team for completing the probe in a time-bound manner.

The robbery occurred near Ashoka Pillar when assailants posing as RBI officials intercepted a CMS Info Systems cash-van and fled with the currency after forcing the crew off the vehicle.

Police had earlier arrested several suspects, including Naik and former CMS employees, and recovered a substantial portion of the stolen amount during the investigation. —*PTI*

Didn't come to Delhi to breathe the air, says DKS

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said in New Delhi that he did not discuss the alleged power tussle with the party High Command. He said that only political matters regarding the upcoming Assam polls were discussed.

"We came here to discuss political things, not just to breathe air," he said.

Shivakumar met party leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday.

"They will take the call whenever they find it suitable," Shivakumar said.

With the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah-led government set to complete 1,000 days in office on Friday, Shivakumar added that "patience will also pay", adding that the Congres will announce its sixth guarantee — the Bhoomi guarantee, which will provide "pakka khata". —*PTI*

MAHASHIVARATRI POOJA CAN BE HELD AT ALAND DARGAH, SAYS SC

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea seeking to restrain the holding of Mahashivaratri puja at the Ladle Mashak Dargah premises and the samadhi of Hindu Saint Raghava Chaitanya in Karnataka's Aland.

The shrine, associated with a 14th-century Sufi saint and the 15th-century Hindu saint, has historically been a shared place of worship. However, tensions flared in 2022 when disputes arose over religious rights at the dargah, leading to communal unrest.

The apex court said Article 32 of the Constitution cannot be invoked by the petitioner when the issue is pending in the Karnataka High Court.

The top court heard a plea filed by Khaleel Ansari seeking to restrain interference with the property and prevent any "unlawful entry, mobilisation, congregation by the private respondents as well as restrain any interim orders permitting entry and pooja".

The Karnataka High Court had permitted 15 Hindu devotees to perform Shivaratri rituals at the Raghava Chaitanya Shivaling. —*PTI*

Rs 1.7cr found at govt worker's friend's home

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

A sum of Rs 1.70 crore was seized from the flat of a friend of a senior government engineer during Lokayukta raids conducted in connection with a disproportionate assets case in Karnataka, officials said on Thursday.

The recovery was made during searches linked to HM Janardhan, Superintendent Engineer in the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society, against whom a case has been registered at the Bengaluru Rural Lokayukta Police Station based on information regarding alleged acquisition of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Earlier, Lokayukta sleuths carried out simultaneous searches at several premises linked to four government officers in Bengaluru, Davangere and Dharwad.

Further investigation is underway. —*PTI*

Rs 25 cr sanctioned for 2,500 'Akka Cafes' in K'taka

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The government has sanctioned Rs 25 crore to establish 2,500 coffee kiosks, branded 'Akka Cafes', to be operated by women trained under self-help groups, Industries Minister MB Patil said on Thursday. He was speaking after inaugurating the India International Coffee Festival, organised by the Speciality Coffee Association of India (SCAI), at Palace Grounds. Patil said the Coffee Board, in collaboration with the National Rural Livelihood Mission–Karnataka, is training one lakh women from self-help groups across the State in coffee brew-ing, café management and entrepreneurship.

The government is also providing scholarships to children of workers employed in coffee estates and large plantations in Kodagu district.

At the 'Kala Loka' outlet set up by the Industries Department at Kempegowda International Airport, coffee is being showcased and sold alongside more than 45 other GI-tagged products from Karnataka, with distinctive packaging and branding.

Coffee is cultivated over 2.2 lakh hectares in the State, making Karnataka India's largest producer, Patil noted.

Nearly 75 per cent of the coun-try's total coffee output comes from Hassan, Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru, he added. —*PTI*

ABUSED POLICE

Drunk man complains about 'noisy' kids, held

MANGALURU, 12 FEB

A bank employee was arrested in Mangaluru for allegedly entering a police station in an intoxicated state and abusing officers while attempting to lodge what police described as a "trivial complaint".

The accused, Manjappa Surendran, a resident of an apartment complex in Mangaluru and an employee at a Yeyyadi branch of bank, had reportedly called the police multiple times, complaining about a disturbance caused by youth playing shuttle in his residential compound, police said.

Unsatisfied with police response, Surendran allegedly arrived at the Kavoor police station on Wednesday late evening under the influence of alcohol, insisting that officers register his complaint immediately.

When police did not act on his demand, he allegedly threatened to escalate the matter to senior officials.

Officers noticed his intoxicated condition and attempted to counsel him.

Surendran reportedly tried to leave the premises on a scooter with his wife, but police intercepted him near Pacchanady and took him into custody. During questioning, he allegedly used abusive language against police personnel.

He has been remanded to 14 days of judicial custody after a medical examination confirmed he was intoxicated. —*PTI*

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Puducherry CM reiterates demand for statehood

PUDUCHERRY, 12 FEB

Chief Minister N Rangasamy on Thursday renewed his demand for full statehood for Puducherry, stating that the Union Territory's limited constitutional powers have hindered swift decision-making and implementation of schemes. Responding to DMK members R Siva and AMH Nazeem in the Assembly, he said his party would support any move towards statehood if there was consensus among all political parties. The opposition pledged full backing, even supporting strong measures if required. Rangasamy highlighted Rs 200 crore allocated by the Centre for rural roads and a Rs 500 rise in monthly pensions. He said welfare schemes were implemented without discrimination. The House was adjourned sine die ahead of the Assembly elections in the state.—*PTI*

TN police impose curbs, QR code passes for TVK rally

CHENNAI, 12 FEB

The Tamil Nadu police permitted actor-politician Vijay-led TVK's meeting in Salem, imposing a cap on the number of participants and also entry passes with QR code, similar to the Puducherry police arrangement in the backdrop of the Karur tragedy. Only 4,998 people with QR code passes will be allowed to participate in the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam's meeting in Salem scheduled for 13 February. Following the tragic stampede that claimed 41 lives in Karur at a meeting addressed by Vijay on 27 September 2025, the Puducherry police permitted TVK's rally in the Union Territory early in December only after permitting 5,000 TVK members possessing the QR code passes. They also ensured drinking water and toilet facilities, and restricted the entry of pregnant women, children and the elderly.—*PTI*

Kejri withdraws HC plea against ED in excise case

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Delhi High Court on Thursday permitted AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal to withdraw his petition challenging Enforcement Directorate (ED) summonses in the excise policy-linked money laundering case. His counsel said the plea would not be pursued as he had already been acquitted in cases filed for failing to appear before the agency. A bench led by Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya dismissed the petition as withdrawn, keeping all legal issues open. The ED said it would appeal the trial court's acquittal order. Kejriwal, who was later arrested in the case, is currently on interim bail. The Supreme Court is examining questions on the "need and necessity of arrest" under the PMLA. —*PTI*

Bengali migrant murdered in Pune, says Mamata

KOLKATA, 12 FEB

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday claimed that a 24-year-old migrant from the state was murdered in Maharashtra for speaking Bengali. Banerjee termed it a "hate crime" and demanded the immediate arrest of the perpetrators. "I am enraged and sickened beyond words by the barbaric murder of Sukhen Mahato, a 24-year-old migrant from Bandwan in Purulia, the sole earning member of his family, in Pune," the CM said in an X post. "This is nothing but a hate crime. A man was murdered for his language, his identity, his roots," she said. "This is the consequence of weaponising xenophobia and innocents are turned into targets," the CM added. —*PTI*

'Trap deal': Oppn protests against India-US pact

MPs accuse govt of backing industrialists, choking farmers

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Opposition MPs protested at the Parliament House complex on Thursday, accusing the government of "surrendering" Indian interests under the India-US interim trade deal and favouring industrialists over workers.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC general secretaries KC Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Rahul Gandhi, DMK's TR Baalu, SP's Dharmendra Yadav, Jaya Bachchan, and CPI-ML's Sudama Prasad were among those protesting near the Makar Dwar with banners reading "Trap Deal" and posters alleging "Narender Surrender". MPs raised slogans such as "US deal hai atyachari" and "desh ko bechna bandh karo".

Rahul Gandhi condemned the deal as a "wholesale surrender", claiming India's energy security and farmers' interests were compromised. He asked whether Prime Minister Modi would heed workers and farmers or was under a "grip too strong".

The protests coincided with a day-long strike by central trade unions mobilising against anti-worker and pro-corporate policies, including the four new labour codes.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party MP Prashant Padole and others stages a protest over the India-US interim trade deal during the Budget session of Parliament in New Delhi —*PTI*

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed solidarity with striking workers, calling the trade deal and government policies a betrayal of farmers.

The forum claims 30 crore workers are being organised for a general strike. Kharge said the trade deal and changes to MGNREGA threaten millions of farmers, labourers, and workers.

During the Lok Sabha debate on the Industrial Relations Code (Amendment) Bill, Congress leader Kodikunnil Suresh said the government is dominating rather than negotiating with labour, calling Thursday's strike a "warning signal" of policy failure. Leaders from SP, TMC, and Shiv Sena-UBT echoed concerns, accusing the government of weakening workers' rights, favouring industrialists, and ignoring labour welfare, with fixed-term contracts limiting job security, loans, and livelihoods.

The opposition warned that continued marginalisation of workers and farmers could translate into political consequences, asserting that India's labour force is a key pillar of the economy that must be protected. —*PTI*

SC rejects Jairam's plea on green clearances, warns of fines

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a petition filed by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday concerning retrospective environmental clearances to projects.

The SC also warned Jairam's lawyer of exemplary costs if this kind of pleas are filed.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked how can the petitioner seek a review of its verdict through a writ.

"Please tell us how the writ is maintainable. There was a judgement. That has been set aside by a larger bench. Now, you are indirectly filing a review," the CJI told the counsel appearing for Ramesh. "Be ready for exemplary cost," the CJI said.

As the bench showed its disinclination in entertain the petition, the counsel sought permission to withdraw it.

The bench permitted him to withdraw the plea with liberty to avail remedy in accordance with law.

On 18 November 2025, reversing its own verdict, the apex court paved the way for retrospective environmental clearance by the Centre and other authorities to projects found violating environmental norms related to payment of heavy penalties, observing that otherwise "thousands of crores would go waste."

The court, by a 2:1 majority, held that numerous important public projects worth nearly Rs 20,000 crore will be demolished if the 16 May verdict, which barred the Centre from granting retrospective environmental clearance to several projects, is not recalled. — *PTI*

4-member DGCA team visits Ajit's plane crash site

PUNE, 12 FEB

A four-member DGCA team visited the site of the Learjet crash near Baramati on Wednesday that killed Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, pilot Capt. Sumit Kapoor, co-pilot Capt. Shambhavi Pathak, PSO Vidip Jadhav, and flight attendant Pinky Mali. The team reviewed CCTV and other footage linked to the 28 January incident.

The government noted that Baramati is an uncontrolled airfield, with traffic information provided by local flying school instructors. AAIB and DGCA recovered the aircraft's black box. Union Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said the probe would be time-bound. —*PTI*

Oppn barred from slandering Assam CM

GUWAHATI, 12 FEB

A court in Guwahati restrained Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi, Bhupesh Baghel and Jitendra Singh from making "defamatory statements" against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has filed a Rs 500 crore defamation case.

After hearing the petitioner's counsel, the Civil Judge of Senior Division No 1, Nayanjyoti Sarma, ordered an 'ad-interim injunction' on Wednesday, restraining Gogoi, Baghel and Singh, and a prominent Assamese daily, from " publishing any defamatory statements concerning the petitioner till their appearance in court."

The court fixed the date of appearance of the defendants before it on 9 March.

Advocate General Devajit Saikia said the CM's counsel argued that the details of all assets belonging to him and his family have been filed in election affidavits from 2001.

Besides, according to the rules of the state government, all ministers, including the CM, and senior officials have to declare their assets annually, and Sarma has been doing it regularly, Saikia said.

The AG said the CM has been a regular Income Tax assessee for over 30 years. "All his assets are reflected in income tax filings, he said. — *PTI*

OFFENSIVE VIDEO: ASSAM BJP SOCIAL MEDIA CO-CONVENOR REMOVED

GUWAHATI, 12 FEB

The Assam BJP has removed a co-convenor of its social media team for posting a controversial video featuring Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a senior leader said on Thursday.The video showed Sarma purportedly firing a shot at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, with "point-blank shot" as the caption.

The AI-generated video was uploaded on the state BJP's official X handle on Saturday. The removed person is Ron Vikash Gaurav. — *PTI*

Gujarat Congress moves HC against SIR

SURAT, 12 FEB

Two Congress leaders from Surat, Vipulkumar Udhnawala and Vinod Patil, have approached the Gujarat High Court challenging the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging widespread violations and "arbitrary deletion" of voters' names.

The petition names the Chief Electoral Officer, Surat's District Electoral Officer, and local Electoral Registration Officers as respondents, and seeks directions to ensure compliance with the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. It alleges BJP workers are submitting bulk objections in Form-7 without proper documentation and that authorities are deleting names without issuing notices or hearing affected voters, in violation of Rules 13–17 and 21A.

The plea cites Supreme Court precedents, highlighting that draft roll inclusion presumes citizenship. Congress leaders also demand action against those filing false objections and a stay on the SIR process. —*PTI*

36% of Uttar Pradesh voters receive SIR notices

LUCKNOW, 12 FEB

- 10.04 million voters face non-mapping issues, while 22.2 million have logical discrepancies in the draft voter list published on 6 January, 2026. Hearings on the notices are on-going at designated centres.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued notices to around 36 per cent of voters under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Uttar Pradesh. State Chief Electoral Officer **Navdeep Rinwa** stated that 10.9 million voters out of 32.6 million on the electoral rolls have received notices.

Of these, 10.04 million voters face non-mapping issues, while 22.2 million have logical discrepancies in the draft voter list published on 6 January, 2026. Hearings on the notices are on-going at designated centres.

The CEO emphasised that any violence or misbehaviour towards authorised officers will be treated seriously, with strict legal action taken. District Election Officers must display voter lists publicly and online, while Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will be present at Voter Help Centres daily, equipped with necessary forms and voter lists.

Affected individuals can submit objections or documents personally or via authorised representatives within 10 days.

Adequate seating, drinking water, toilets, electricity, and internet facilities will be provided at hearing centres. Weekend and holiday hearings are planned for working voters, while officials will conduct inspections smooth proceedings —*PTI*

PM THREATENED

Rijiju shares video to show Cong MPs 'threatening' Birla

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday alleged that 20-25 Congress MPs stormed Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's chamber during recent parliamentary disruptions, abusing him and threatening the Prime Minister. Rijiju shared a video clip of the incident on social media, which he claimed was recorded illegally, sparking a fresh political flashpoint.

He said senior Congress leaders K C Venugopal and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were present and allegedly encouraged the MPs. "Had our MPs misbehaved, our leaders would stop them. But their leaders were egging them on," Rijiju said, adding that the Speaker was deeply hurt but showed leniency.

Rijiju criticised Rahul Gandhi for raising sensitive national security matters publicly, saying it demeaned Parliament and exposed him politically.

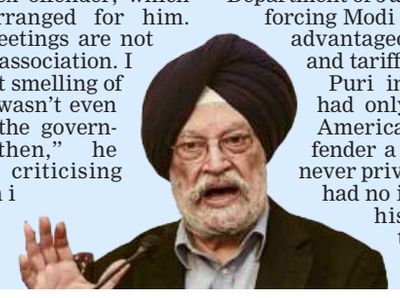
Responding, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra called the minister's claims a "lie", asserting she remained calm and did not encourage any misconduct. —*PTI*

RAHUL MADE AS A** OF HIMSELF: PURI DENIES VISITING EPSTEIN'S ISLAND

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday called Congress MP Rahul Gandhi an "a**" while defending himself against claims over his name appearing in the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's files, and allegations that it had compromised India's trade agreement with the US. Puri denied ever visiting Epstein's island.

Speaking to NDTV, he said he felt a "sense of unease" during work-related meetings with the convicted sex offender, which were arranged for him. "Two meetings are not guilt by association. I come out smelling of roses... wasn't even part of the government then," he added, criticising Gandhi for "making a mountain out of a mole-hill".



Responding to claims the Epstein link affected the trade deal, Puri said: "For a country like India, with 50 per cent of GDP in the external sector, trade deals are crucial... Rahul is a young, not-so-young politician who needs better advisors. If he had read the framework, he would not have made an absolute ass of himself."

Gandhi had claimed after a Lok Sabha speech that Puri and businessman Anil Ambani were named in US Department of Justice files, forcing Modi into a disadvantageous trade and tariff deal.

Puri insisted he had only met the American sex-offender a few times, never privately, and had no interest in his activities. —*PTI*

RERA only facilitates defaulting builders: SC

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Thursday said all states must rethink the constitution of the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) as the institution is doing nothing, except facilitating defaulting builders.

The apex court said the people for whom RERA was created were "completely depressed, disgusted and disappointed" and asserted that it won't mind if the institution was abolished.

It permitted the Himachal Pradesh government to shift the office of RERA to the place of its choice.

The court issued a notice on a plea filed by the Himachal Pradesh government and others challenging an order of the Himachal Pradesh High Court in a matter pertaining to the shifting of the state RERA office from Shimla to Dharamshala.

The high court had earlier stayed a June 2025 notification concerning the shifting of RERA office till further order.

Later the high court directed the continuance of the interim order.

The top court stayed the high court's direction.

The state said the decision to shift the Himachal Pradesh RERA office from Shimla to Dharamshala was taken to "decongest" Shimla and it was purely on administrative considerations. —*PTI*

SEVA TEERTH COMPLEX

PMO moves from South Block, gets new address

The Prime Minister Office will move into the newly constructed Seva Teerth complex on Friday. PM Narendra Modi will inaugurate Seva Tirtha along with Kartavya Bhawan 1 and 2. The development is part of the ₹20,000 crore Central Vista Redevelopment Project.

The new PMO complex
Seva Teerth

Location:
Dara Shikoh Road, New Delhi

Area
2.26 lakh sqft (around 5 acres)

Cost:
₹1,189 crore

THREE BUILDINGS

- Seva Tirtha-1: Prime Minister's Office.
- Seva Tirtha-2: Cabinet Secretariat.
- Seva Tirtha-3: National Security Council Secretariat and NSA Ajit Doval's office.

A new Prime Minister's residence is also under construction nearby. Modi will shift from 7, Lok Kalyan Marg once it is completed.

KARTAVYA BHAWAN

New consolidated offices for key ministries, including: Finance, Defence, Health, Corporate Affairs, Education, Culture, Law and Justice.

Teen murdered in Delhi, 4 minors among 7 held

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

A 17-year-old boy was allegedly stabbed to death in Bawana, outer north Delhi, police said on Thursday. The victim, Salim from JJ Colony, was attacked around 8.30pm on Wednesday over a previous dispute and later declared dead in hospital with multiple stab wounds. Seven suspects, including four juveniles aged 16 to 17, have been apprehended. Three adults Salin, 21, Sahil, 20, and Fahad 18, were arrested. Police recovered four knives and are examining CCTV footage. *–PTI*

Hyderabad airport gets hoax bomb threat

HYDERABAD, 12 FEB

Authorities at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport have declared a bomb threat a hoax after carrying out thorough security checks. An email from an unidentified sender warned of a blast timed with the arrival of Gulf Air flight GF 274 from Bahrain on Wednesday night. However, the aircraft had already landed safely by the time the message was received. Security teams conducted extensive inspections across the terminal but found nothing suspicious. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation. *–PTI*

Kerala HC grants anticipatory bail to Mamkootathil

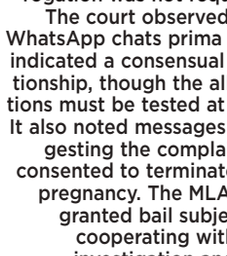
KOCHI, 12 FEB

The Kerala High Court has granted anticipatory bail to expelled Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil in a rape and forced abortion case, stating custodial interrogation was not required. The court observed that WhatsApp chats prima facie indicated a consensual relationship, though the allegations must be tested at trial. It also noted messages suggesting the complainant consented to terminate her pregnancy. The MLA was granted bail subject to cooperating with the investigation and not contacting witnesses. *–PTI*

Actor Rajpal's bail plea hearing put off to 16 Feb

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Actor Rajpal Yadav will have to spend at least four more nights in Tihar Jail after the Delhi High Court adjourned his bail hearing to 16 February. The actor was pulled up by the court for reopening the case after failing to honour his commitment. The court also issued a notice to Murli Projects Company, which gave a Rs 5 crore loan to Yadav in 2010 for his film, 'Ata Pata Lapataa,' to file a response to the bail application. The matter pertains to nearly Rs 9 crore that Yadav failed to repay. He has been in judicial custody in Tihar Jail since 5 February. — PTI



—SCREENGRAB

Former DD news reader Sarla Maheshwari dead

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Former Doordarshan newsreader Sarla Maheshwari, one of the most recognised faces of Indian television in the 1980s and 1990s, has died in Delhi aged 71, former colleague Shammi Narang said. Maheshwari worked with the public broadcaster from 1976 to 2005 and was a pioneer of TV news when transmissions were limited. Over nearly three decades, she witnessed the transition from black-and-white to colour broadcasts. Doordarshan paid tribute to her gentle voice and dignified presentation. Her last rites will take place at the Nigam Bodh Ghat at 4pm. *–PTI*

Strike hits Kerala, not much effect elsewhere

Stir partial in Odisha, TN, Goa, J'khand, Chh'garh and MP

THIRUVA'PURAM, 12 FEB

Members of trade unions stage a protest in Thiruvananthapuram during a nationwide strike called by a joint forum of central trade unions to demand the repeal of the four labour codes and some Central schemes *–PTI*

The nationwide strike called by trade unions against the Centre's Labour Codes brought normal life to a standstill across Kerala on Thursday.

Although the state government declared dies-non for government employees, attendance at offices is expected to remain low as transport vehicles remained off the roads.

The General Administration Department issued an order stating that unauthorised absence of an officer on account of the strike shall be treated as "dies-non." The pay for the day on which the strike is taking place will be withheld from the salary if officials do not report for duty, the order said.

Passengers arriving by train from other states were also affected. Police operated buses at some stations to assist stranded travellers.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor criticised the shutdown in Kerala as a "lamentable irony" that turned into a "Kerala Bandh."

In a post on X, Tharoor said that while the rest of India has evolved beyond such coercive disruptions, Kerala is held hostage by the organised tyranny of a minority.

Meanwhile, normal life mostly remained unaffected by the strike call given by a joint forum of central trade unions across the country on Thursday to protest against the alleged "anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national pro-corporate policies of the central government."

A mixed response was seen in Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab.

In Jharkhand, banking, insurance and coal sectors have been affected by the strike, Bank of India (BOI) Employees' Union state Deputy General Secretary Umesh Das said. The left and the Congress supported the strike in the state.

In Chhattisgarh, several nationalised banks remained closed as employees joined the strike. Staff of insurance companies, post offices, along with labourers and farmers, also participated in the agitation, affecting operations in their respective sectors. Mining activities in the mineral-rich state were partially hit. — *PTI*

NO RELEASE TILL NAME CHANGED

SC asks 'Ghooskhor Pandat' makers to change film title

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice to the makers of the Netflix film 'Ghooskhor Pandat', starring Manoj Bajpayee, over its allegedly "casteist" title. The top and warned that the movie will not be allowed to release unless its name is changed.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan hearing a PIL seeking a stay on the film's release directed filmmaker Neeraj Pandey to inform the court of the new title and file an affidavit stating that the film does not denigrate any section of society.

The plea, filed by Atul Mishra, National Organisation Secretary of the Brahman Samaj of India, alleged that the title, which translates to "corrupt Brahmin", promotes caste-based stereotyping and threatens public order and communal harmony.

Notices were also issued to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Central Board of Film Certification.

The bench added that freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a) is subject to reasonable restrictions. The court emphasised the constitutional principle of fraternity, questioning why filmmakers should "denigrate a section of society" and potentially add to social unrest.

Counsel for the filmmaker told the court that a new title is yet to be finalised but assured it would avoid conflict. Earlier, Netflix informed the Delhi High Court that the film would be renamed. The matter will be heard again on 19 February. *—PTI*

The Lamborghini luxury car which crashed into pedestrians *–PTI*

Biker falls into pit in Kanpur Dehat, dies

KANPUR, 12 FEB

A 25-year-old man died after his motorcycle plunged into a deep, waterlogged pit on the side of a poorly lit road in Kanpur Dehat district, police said on Thursday.

The deceased, Dheerendra Kumar, a resident of Bhawanipur village in Rasulabad, possibly lost control of the motorcycle due to darkness and fell into the open pit filled with slush. The area lacked street lighting, and his cries for help went unheard as he remained trapped in mud throughout the night, police said.

Station House Officer Praveen Kumar Yadav said the victim had left his workplace at the Panki power station around 6 pm but did not return home.

The incident occurred on Tuesday evening near Kadri village along the Rura-Shivli road. Farmers heading to their fields on Wednesday morning spotted the victim stuck in the slush and alerted villagers and the police.

Village head Ankush Kumar and other locals pulled him out and attempted to revive him before calling for medical assistance, police said. He was taken to the community health centre in Shivli where doctors declared him dead.

Autopsy revealed that the deceased had sustained a fatal head injury in the fall, the SHO said, adding that no foul play was suspected and no FIR has been registered as the death appeared to be accidental. The victim's brother, Brijendra Kumar, said both of them worked as welders at the power plant.

"He left in the evening but did not return. We received a call from the police the next morning," he said. — *PTI*

Tycoon's son gets bail in Lamborghini crash case

KANPUR, 12 FEB

Shivam Mishra, son of local tobacco baron K K Mishra, got bail from a court here on Thursday, hours after his arrest in connection with the Lamborghini crash that left several people injured on VIP Road earlier this week.

After his arrest, the police produced him before the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate around 10 am, seeking 14 days' judicial custody.

Anant Sharma, counsel for the accused, said the court did not allow it and instead granted him bail on a personal bond of Rs 20,000.

The arrest came a day after a man claimed that he, and not Shivam, was driving the car at the time of the incident and went to the local court to surrender.

The court, however, rejected his surrender plea after the police maintained its stand that it had evidence to establish Shivam was behind the wheel.

In the run-up to his arrest, Shivam had been in a hospital in Delhi where he was undergoing treatment for a medical condition, his family claimed, an official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Atul Srivastava told PTI that the police arrested Shivam, after getting specific inputs that he had arrived in Kanpur.

Five police teams were set up to arrest Shivam, as he was not cooperating with the investigation and repeatedly failed to appear before the police for questioning, the DCP said. Earlier, a police officer told PTI that Shivam was arrested from a hospital, without specifying the location and in his later version, he said that the arrest was made in Kanpur. — *PTI*

Jamiat slams Centre's order on singing Vande Mataram song

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

- Jamiat head Madani said Muslims do not prevent anyone from singing Vande Mataram but some verses of the song portray the homeland as a deity

Prominent Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind on Thursday described as "unilateral" and "arbitrary" the Centre's directive mandating the singing of all six stanzas of the national song Vande Mataram at official functions, and alleged it is a "blatant attack" on the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution.

Jamiat president Maulana Arshad Madani said Muslims do not prevent anyone from singing or playing Vande Mataram but some verses of the song are based on beliefs that portray the homeland as a deity, which contradict the fundamental belief of monotheistic religions.

The Centre's "unilateral decision" to mandate all stanzas of Vande Mataram to be sung at all government programmes, schools, colleges, and functions is not only a "blatant attack on the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution of India but also a systematic attempt to curtail the constitutional rights of minorities," he said in a post on X. "Since a Muslim worships only Allah, forcing him to sing this song is a clear violation of Article 25 of the Constitution and several judgments of the Supreme Court," he claimed.

Making this song mandatory and attempting to impose it on citizens is not an expression of patriotism, rather, it reflects electoral politics, a sectarian agenda, and a deliberate effort to divert public attention from fundamental issues, Madani said. Making Vande Mataram compulsory is a clear assault on the Constitution, religious freedom, and democratic principles, he claimed. — *PTI*

Telangana govt plans mobile anganwadis

HYDERABAD, 12 FEB

The Telangana government is planning to introduce mobile anganwadi centres to provide nutritious food and other services to beneficiaries in underserved slums and residential areas of Hyderabad.

Official sources said on Thursday that the Women and Child Welfare Department has been facing difficulties in establishing new anganwadi centres in the city due to high population density, frequent migration and the unavailability of suitable buildings.

A recent survey identified 25,310 children, pregnant women and lactating mothers within HMDA limits eligible for anganwadi services. However, these areas lack such facilities.

Women and Child Development Minister D Anasuya Seethakka emphasised that no beneficiary should be deprived of services under the anganwadi programme. Officials have proposed to hire 37 vehicles to cover 274 slum clusters under the mobile anganwadi initiative. The units will be attached to the nearest anganwadi and will distribute food and provide other services. — *PTI*

Sabarimala gold loss: Former TDB Commissioner gets statutory bail

PATHANAMTHITTA/ KOLLAM, 12 FEB

A court here on Thursday granted statutory bail to former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) Thiruva bharanam Commi ssioner KS Baiju in one of the cases related to the gold loss from Sabarimala temple. Kollam Vigilance Court Judge Mohit CS granted bail to Baiju in the alleged gold loss from the doorframes of the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) failed to file a chargesheet within 90 days of his arrest.

However, the fourth accused Baiju will remain in jail. He is also the seventh accused in the loss of gold from the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) plates. Five of the 12 arrested are on bail.

Meanwhile, the court extended the remand period of former TDB president KP Sankara Das. The SIT also went to the hill shrine on Thursday to collect fresh samples for scientific analysis, after getting permission from the Kerala HC. The court has directed the SIT to file a report on 19 February, on the samples collected and the agencies to which they were sent for scientific analysis. — *PTI*

CZECH WOMAN TOURIST ASSAULTED IN GOA

PANAJI, 12 FEB

A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly assaulting a woman tourist from the Czech Republic at Agonda Beach in Goa's Kushavati district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place at 10.15am on 9 February at Agonda Cliff, where the accused allegedly picked an argument with the tourist and assaulted her with fists and a stone, causing grievous injuries.

A complaint was filed at Canacona police station on 10 February. It was immediately not clear what triggered the argument.

The accused is Rohan Velip, 22, a resident of Benordem, Balli. He was nabbed in 24 hours. — *PTI*

- The incident took place at 10.15am on 9 February at Agonda Cliff. The accused picked up an argument with the Czech tourist and assaulted her

Drone exposes copying in Beed, 17 teachers booked

BEED, 12 FEB

A case has been registered against 17 teachers after drone surveillance exposed large-scale copying during the Class 12 examination at a centre in Maharashtra's Beed.

The incident occurred on Tuesday, the first day of the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education exams, at Centre 224 in Chousala. Drone-mounted cameras reportedly captured supervisors in 16 examination halls not only failing to prevent malpractice but allegedly assisting students in cheating.

The episode dealt a blow to the administration's efforts to ensure a "copy-free" examination system.

An FIR was lodged at Neknoor police station on Wednesday night against 17 teachers, including the chief conductor.

Charges have been invoked under the Maharashtra Universities, Boards and Other Specified Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices) Act and the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Across Beed district, 45,247 students are appearing at 103 centres.

A similar case was reported in neighbouring Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, where 23 people were booked. —*PTI*

'NO RELIEF UNLESS YOU ATTEND COURT'

HC pulls up Mallya for avoiding court

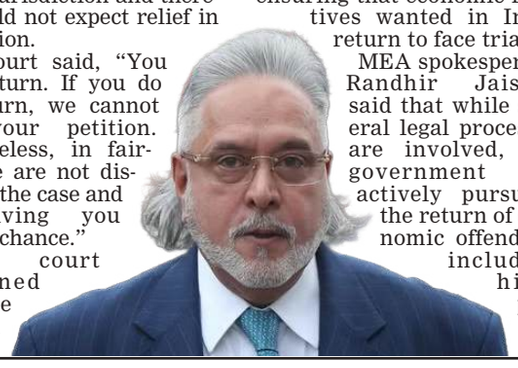
MUMBAI, 12 FEB

The Bombay High Court on Thursday reprimanded fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya, saying that he cannot seek equitable relief while deliberately avoiding court proceedings.

The court gave Mallya a final chance to clarify if he intends to return to India. Mallya's petition challenges the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act and the declaration of his fugitiveness.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Chandrashekhar was hearing Vijay Mallya's petition challenging the constitutional validity of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act and the proceedings declaring him a fugitive. The bench stated that it was inclined to record that Mallya was evading the court's jurisdiction and therefore could not expect relief in his petition.

The court said, "You must return. If you do not return, we cannot hear your petition. Nevertheless, in fairness, we are not dismissing the case and are giving you another chance."



The court adjourned the case until next week.

Earlier, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated that the government remains fully committed to ensuring that economic fugitives wanted in India return to face trial.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that while several legal processes are involved, the government is actively pursuing the return of economic offenders, including high-profile names like Vijay Mallya and Lalit Modi.

In Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said that as of 31 October 2025, a total of 15 individuals have been declared Fugitive Economic Offenders under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

Of these, nine were involved in large-scale financial fraud against public-sector banks, resulting in a principal loss of Rs 26,645 crore. Interest accrued on these loans up to 31 October 2025, amounts to Rs 31,437 crore, while Rs 19,187 crore has been recovered from them. — *ANI*

WALK FOR PEACE

A group of Buddhist monks walk near Capitol Hill after completing their 108-day Walk for Peace from Texas to Washington on Wednesday. The 19 monks and their dog, Aloka (inset), walked 3,700km across several Southern states in frigid conditions. The monks taught the large crowds that they pulled Vipassana meditation, an ancient Indian technique taught by the Buddha that focuses on breath and the mind-body connection and spread the message of peace and harmony —*PTI*

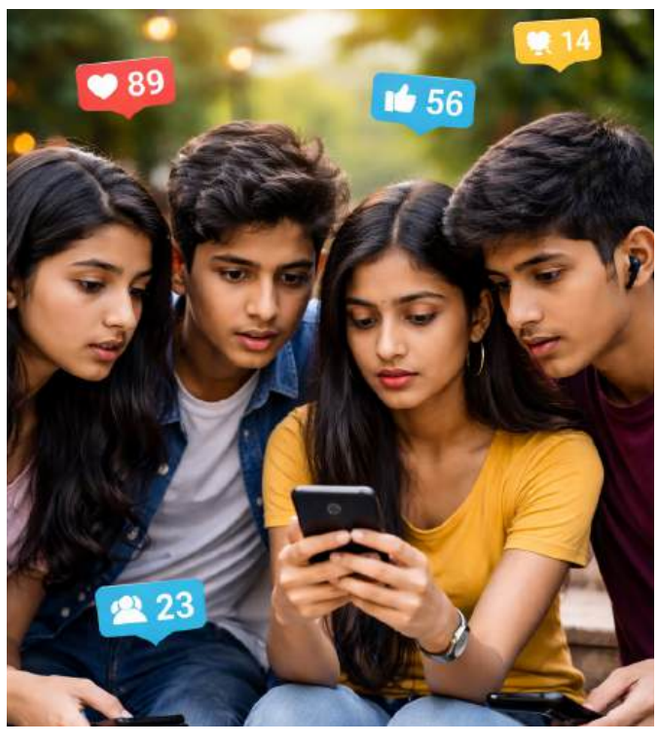
Teens scoff at possible social media ban

Aarav Gupta, 15, a student in Delhi, was scrolling through Instagram when he saw a news alert about the government's plans to consider age-based access to social media platforms.

"How can this even be possible? All my friends plan everything on social media, from birthday parties to football games and even study sessions. This is unfeasible," Gupta told DW. "Anyway, it is hard to implement without mandatory legal IDs for every login. And if it happens, we can easily bypass bans using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or fake birthdays."

In Bhopal, 14-year-old Priya Khullar can't imagine life without social media. "I get most of my information here and keep up with trends in fashion and music. It's hard to imagine a law banning platforms like Instagram and YouTube Shorts for anyone under 16."

Khullar's father isn't sure what the right approach is. "How do you enforce a complete ban? I don't know which risk is worse, letting kids stay online or forcing them into digital isolation," he said.



AI

GLOBAL TREND

In December, Australia became the first country to ban people under 16 from using certain social media platforms. The government said the goal was to protect young people from harmful content and other risks.

Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act requires age-restricted platforms to ensure users under 16 cannot hold accounts. France's National Assembly has backed a similar ban for children under 15, while the UK, Austria, Poland, Denmark and Greece are studying the issue.

Inspired in part by Australia's move and by guidance in the recent Economic Survey, several Indian states are now exploring bans for children under 16.

"Policies on age-based access limits may be considered, as younger users are more vulnerable to compulsive use and harmful content," stated the survey. Andhra Pradesh and Goa are currently the most active, with ministerial panels reviewing how such a ban might work.

FEARS OF ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Economic Survey's recommendation is not legally binding but serves as a strong suggestion.

It highlights the risks of social media addiction, noting that access is no longer a barrier and that digital addiction can damage mental health. It also cited studies that show social media addiction is strongly linked to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and stress due to cyberbullying among people aged 15–24.

This debate gained renewed urgency after three children in Ghaziabad in northern India reportedly died by suicide last week. Investigators are looking into whether an online Korean drama played any role.

Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, a Member of Parliament from Andhra's ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP), has introduced a private member's bill targeting social media use by children under 16.

"Social media companies must prevent minors from creating accounts and face strict penalties for non-compliance," he told DW. "Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube are now legally required in Australia to take steps to deactivate accounts for users under 16. We can do it here, too."

'AN ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGE'

India is the world's second-largest smartphone market after China, with around 660 million smartphone users and more than 950 million internet users.

The country has over 1.16 billion mobile connections, making it a major growth market for platforms like Instagram and YouTube. TikTok has been banned in India since 2020.

About one-fourth of India's population is in the 0–14 age group, meaning hundreds of millions of potential underage users.

Experts say India's size and diversity make an Australian-style law hard to implement.

"A ban can be enforced only on paper by asking platforms to block under-16 accounts. But in India, it will be weak in practice and risky for rights," said Apar Gupta of the Internet Freedom Foundation. Gupta said the real need is regulating addictive platform design, restricting child profiling, funding research and empowering an independent regulator.

"If it's self-declared, kids will bypass it. If it's ID-based, it raises privacy and surveillance concerns," he said, adding that implementation through schools or networks would be "blunt" and overly broad.

India also has a 43 per cent VPN adoption rate, the second-highest in the world, making enforcement even tougher.

"Even with platform enforcement, teens will get around it using VPNs, shared adult accounts, or new apps with weak moderation," Gupta said. "That shifts harm rather than reducing it."

WHY IT MAY BACKFIRE

Prateek Waghre from the Tech Global Institute says that state governments may not even have the authority to impose such bans, which likely fall under federal powers. He also warned that enforcing such laws would require identifying every user, increasing risks for vulnerable communities.

"Social problems need broader solutions, not just restrictions aimed at platforms," he said.

—*DW News*

SALAR ساہر

The warmth of radio waves in a cold digital age

UTTHARA KUMARI B

Who even listens to radio these days? Well, many still do. Listener habits may have changed but not the love for this old friend.

World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February every year to spread awareness about radio as a medium to inform, educate, and entertain. Despite the theme this year being 'Radio and Artificial Intelligence', nostalgia is in the AIR!

This brown box occupied a pride of place in our house, sitting on a pedestal in the hall. It was our radio, our dignified and comforting companion.

There used to be a well-thumbed book with a brown cover. It was the radio licence which had to be renewed every year.

I grew up on a staple diet of radio in the 1970s-1980s. It gave us news, it gave us 'man chahe geet', 'chutkule', and cricket commentary.

Television came later. And Internet even more later.

We would wake up to the opening strains of the AIR signature tune.

A window to the world, radio served as the soundtrack of our lives.

Two broadcasting stations dominated the airwaves - All India Radio (AIR) and Radio Ceylon when the country came to a standstill every Wednesday night at 8pm to listen to Binaca Geetmala.

India's broadcasting journey began in June 1923 with the Radio Club of Bombay's first transmission. The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) was established on 23 July, 1927, marking the birth of organised radio broadcasting in the country.

All India Radio (AIR) came into existence in 1936. In 1956, AIR was officially renamed 'Akashvani'.

Vividh Bharati, the entertainment wing of AIR where advertisements were allowed, started in 1957.

My day would begin by listening to the devotional songs on Vividh Bharati (medium wave) and would end with a programme called 'Bela Ke Phool' at night.

At 7.30am sharp, a musical voice would say 'Sangeeet Saritaaaaa', a programme

WORLD RADIO DAY

where a Hindustani raag and a film song based on that raag would be broadcast every day.

In between there were many programmes like 'Manoranjan', 'Fauji bhayiyon ki Jaimala', 'Hawa Mahal' etc.

There would be the exciting anticipation on whether my favourite song would be played. But these days when we can listen to any song any time at the click of a button, we no longer have such delicious uncertainties.

Our time was measured not by a clock but by the programmes on the radio. Like the pips before the 9pm news in English on AIR. It meant it was time to go to bed.

The arrival of the transistor, with an antenna sticking out, freed us from the anchored nature of the radio. You could hug it, cradle it, take it anywhere.

The short wave used to be quite moody. Just at the moment I would be all ready for my favourite song, the 'little sistor' would crackle, hiss, produce more static... increasing my frustration. I would bang it, shake it, take it round the house looking for that ideal spot where it would catch the signals.

And sometimes our routine would be interrupted by the cricket commentary on AIR whenever India played the Test matches.

You would see everyone glued to a transistor at shops, at homes, at offices, at street corners... and suddenly hear a collective scream denoting that a player had hit a six or got out.

Radio made me not only learn about many things, it also made me discover a place called Jhumri Telaiya, which I always thought was a fictional place.

This town in Jharkhand became legendary for dominating song requests on radio.

And radio expanded gradually. Private participation wasn't allowed until 1993 when the government experimented with a daily, two-hour private show slot on the FM channels in Delhi and Mumbai. In 2001 the first phase of private sector participation (FM Phase I) India's radio sector began.

Over the years, the way people consume media has fundamentally changed. Today, a growing range of FM channels, streaming and podcast apps and AI compete for our divided attention though they give us unprecedented control over what we listen to, when, and how.

But AI is a tool, and not a voice.

Can the conventional radio withstand the digital onslaught though it is reinventing itself while keeping its core intact?

It can. Because radio is an emotion.

The writer is a veteran journalist.

AI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'Yunus' referendum may infringe on Bangladesh's Constitution'

A referendum to elicit public consent in favour of a complicated reform package of Muhammad Yunus' Interim government may threaten the foundational history and bring an end to the continuity of post-independent Bangladesh's 1972 Constitution, experts said on Thursday.

Voting for the 13th parliamentary elections were held along with a referendum on a complex 84-point reform package on Thursday.

The referendum seeks people's consent to the reform proposals called 'July National Charter 2025,' which Yunus announced on 17 October after protracted consultations between the political parties and the National Consensus Commission that he heads.

The referendum ballot features a single question covering four major reform areas of the July Charter. Voters can to vote 'Yes' or 'No'.

"The completed proposals charted out in the referendum being held simultaneously with Thursday's general election appears largely esoteric," political analyst and playwright, Iraj Ahmed said. He said most voters are "uninformed" about the long 84-point reform package, which was presented in a concise way through four questions in the referendum sheet.

"If it is passed, Bangladesh's almost 55 years of constitutional continuity will virtually come to an end," he said.

The 1972 Bangladesh Constitution has been amended 17 time. But this time, critics said, there are a number of proposals which seek to overturn the basic constitutional principles and "settled issues" to build Yunus' promised "new Bangladesh".

Prominent lawyer and constitution expert Tania Amir said referendum and constitutional reforms threatened Bangladesh's foundational history and legal legacy virtually "voiding our history" and largely demeaning the legal foundation of Bangladesh's 1971 Independence.

"The 1972 Constitution is the legal backbone of Bangladesh. Attempts to scrap it mean questioning the very legal basis of Bangladesh as a state," leading jurist and lawyer Swadhin Malik said.

In a nationwide address, Yunus on 9 February made a clarion call seeking "Yes" vote for his proposed reform package.

"If the 'Yes' vote wins in the referendum, Bangladesh's future will be built in a more positive way," Yunus said while addressing senior secretaries and top bureaucrats late on Monday night as electioneering ended 48 hours ahead of the polls.

Interim Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus —*PTI*

Last year, Yunus had said the charter represented a move toward a "civilised society from barbarism."

However, several jurists, including senior lawyer Mohsin Rashid, also questioned the legitimacy of the referendum itself since the Bangladesh Constitution has no provision for such a plebiscite even when the government got the proposal signed by President Mohammed Shahabuddin and subsequently issued an official gazette.

Analysts such as foreign relation expert and former ambassador Mahfuzur Rahman said the four issues recognising the 84-points were not elaborated enough for many voters to clearly understand what changes would occur if the people vote "Yes," and which changes would not occur if people vote "No."

Law professor Malik and other critics said "Yes/No" voting in the dual election could appear difficult for voters to make their choice over the charter containing multiple complex reforms and even informed voters might support some changes but oppose others.

The referendum sought to obligate the next government to implement the charter, thus legitimising the interim regime, they said. Yunus took oath as the Chief Adviser three days after a student-led street protest, dubbed July Uprising, toppled the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on 5 August, 2024.

"Most of the decisions taken in the July Charter, including those in the gazette, are contrary to the current Constitution," Malik said.

Since the Constitution is still in force, the President cannot legally sign this gazette, he said, adding, it could have been acceptable if the Constitution was annulled or suspended under martial law.

Another law professor SM Masum Billah said that out of the 84 reform proposals mentioned in the July Charter, 47 are constitutional amendments, while 37 are to be implemented through ordinary legislation or executive orders.

The government initially proposed that if a political party had a note of dissent on certain proposals, that party would not be obligated to implement those proposals if it came to power. But after failing to reach a resolution on this issue, the government ultimately decided to hold the referendum.

"If 'Yes' wins in the referendum, the next parliament will be obliged to implement the package that included establishment of a bicameral parliament instead of an existing one legislature in the unitary form of Bangladesh's political system," Barrister Amir said.

How can a "sovereign parliament" be obligated to implement the interim government desire when the Constitution did not have any provision of such a referendum while the government was oath bound to the Constitution, Amir questioned.

The July Charter's key-author and co-chair of the National Consensus Commission Ali Reaz said if "Yes" wins, the next parliament will serve as a constitutional reform council, virtually a Constituent Assembly, and within 180 working days, they would have to take steps to carry out constitutional reforms as proposed. —*PTI*

ICE to withdraw from Minnesota: Border Czar

MINNEAPOLIS, 12 FEB

"Operation Metro Surge," the controversial federal immigration crackdown in Minnesota, will conclude, Border Czar Tom Homan announced on Thursday. President Trump concurred with the proposal to end the sweeps, which launched on 1 December and primarily targeted Minneapolis and St. Paul. The operation drew intense scrutiny following mass detentions, widespread protests, and two reported deaths. While the administration labelled detainees "dangerous criminal aliens," reports surfaced of children and US citizens being nabbed. Governor Tim Walz, who discussed the timeline with officials, confirmed he expected the exit within days. The conclusion marks the end of one of the administration's ICE crackdown. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

Pak SC orders eye test for Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD, 12 FEB

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday ordered authorities to constitute a medical board to assess jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's eyesight after reports of severe vision loss in one eye. A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi directed that a medical examination be conducted by 16 February. The court also instructed officials to allow the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder to speak with his children by telephone. Khan, 73, has been held at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since his arrest in August 2023 on corruption charges. A report submitted by PTI lawyer Salman Safdar stated that Khan has only 15 per cent vision in his right eye after suffering a blood clot, despite receiving medical treatment. —*PTI*

Madagascar cyclone death toll rises to 31

ANTANANARIVO, 12 FEB

Cyclone Gezani has killed at least 31 people and displaced more than 6,000 in Madagascar's main port city of Toamasina with winds exceeding 195 kph. Buildings collapsed as the storm made landfall late Tuesday, leaving 36 people seriously injured and four missing. Around 75 per cent of the city's infrastructure was damaged, and power has been cut since Tuesday. Red alerts were issued across several regions, warning of flooding and landslides. Gezani weakened into a tropical storm as it moved inland but could regain strength over the Mozambique Channel. UN released USD 3 million emergency aid as Madagascar reels from repeated cyclones. —*PTI*

Italy backs naval blockades for migrant boats

ROME, 12 FEB

Italy's conservative government, led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, has approved a bill introducing tougher measures to curb illegal immigration, including powers to impose a so-called "naval blockade" on migrant vessels. The cabinet approved the draft law on Wednesday. It must now pass both houses of parliament before taking effect. The package follows the EU's new migration and asylum pact, which Rome intends to implement swiftly. Under the proposal, authorities could block ships from entering Italian territorial waters for up to 30 days if deemed a threat to public order or national security, extendable to six months. Fines of up to Rs 50,000 and vessel confiscation may apply. Intercepted migrants could be transferred to third countries under specific agreements. —*PTI*

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Shafiqur Rahman speaks to the media after votING in Dhaka, while BNP's Tarique Rahman waves to supporters; Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus also greets onlookers as he leaves the polling station—*PTI*

VIOLENCE MARS BANGLADESH POLLS

Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus calls the 2026 polls a journey to 'new Bangladesh'

DHAKA, 12 FEB

Interim Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus said the polls would bring a "new chapter to Bangladesh". on Thursday.

Meanwhile, a series of bomb explosions took place outside a polling station in the Munshiganj-3 constituency, disrupting voting.

The blasts occurred around 10:15am in front of the Makhati Gurucharan High School. Between 10 and 12 crude bombs were detonated. Voting was suspended for around 15 minutes.

EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said voting continued in all centres despite isolated incidents across the country.

The election pits longtime allies – the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami – against each other. Opinion polls have put BNP Chief Tarique Rahman ahead of his Jamaat rival Shafiqur Rahman.

However, the Jamaat has tied up with the Nation Citizen's Party, an offshoot of the student bodies that toppled the now-banned Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime, and may spring a surprise.

Meanwhile, a BNP leader died during an altercation with Jamaat-e-Islami activists outside a polling centre in Khulna. BNP said that Mohibuzzaman Kochi died when a Jamaat leader "pushed him" into a tree. The Jamaat leader claims that the victim "fell ill" amid the unrest.

Yunus has promised to quickly transfer power to the elected government and urged parties, and candidates and other concerned parties to maintain restraint, tolerance and democratic behaviour.

Bangladesh has a history of contested elections since its 1971 independence from Pakistan.

BNP had boycotted several polls which the Awami League won, claiming they were rigged, while the second 1996 election that the BNP won was boycotted by most Opposition parties.

However, Yunus called the election "the beginning of an unprecedented journey toward a new Bangladesh"

The polls he said, would strengthen the county's party.

Alongside the 13th Parliamentary election,

Citizens voted on a referendum on a complex 84-point reform package, dubbed the 'July National Charter'. Some 55,454 observers from 81 local organisations and several foreign countries monitored the elections, while the number of foreign poll monitors was 394.

Meanwhile, a Hindu tea worker was allegedly murdered in Moulvibazar, Bangladesh. His hands and legs were tied. —*PTI*

Polling agents from different parties and people stand outside a polling centre to cast their votes during parliamentary national election in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Thursday —*PTI*

1st in 30 yrs: 'Boat' missing from ballots

For the first time in 30 years, the Awami League's "boat" symbol is missing from the ballot in Bangladesh's general election. This marks the first national vote since Sheikh Hasina was ousted as prime minister following the 2024 student protests. The Election Commission suspended the party's registration last year. The interim government said the ban will remain in place until trials at Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (BD-ICT) are completed. The League boycotted elections in 1988 and 1996. In total, the 'boat' has been absent in three of Bangladesh's 13 elections.

Trump & Bibi talk Iran nuclear deal

WASHINGTON/ DUBAI, 12 FEB

President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met for over two hours on Wednesday to discuss the US's push for a new nuclear deal with Tehran. While Netanyahu sought to expand the talks to include Iran's ballistic missile program and support for proxies like Hamas.

Netanyahu entered the White House out of the view of reporters and left without issuing a statement.

"I insisted that negotiations with Iran continue to see whether a deal could be reached," Trump wrote afterwards, noting that while no definitive agreement was struck, he remains open to a deal—provided Iran avoids the "strikes" it faced during previous failures to negotiate.

This seventh meeting between the leaders comes amid cautious optimism following indirect talks in Oman.

IRAN DEATH TOLL RISES

The diplomatic push coincides with a surge in regional tension and internal Iranian unrest. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) reports that 7,002 people were killed in a recent nationwide crackdown—more than double the 3,117 deaths acknowledged by Tehran.

To maintain "maximum pressure," the US has deployed the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier to the Middle East. Following a drone shoot-down and a confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz, Trump told Axios he may deploy a second carrier. "We have an armada heading there," Trump warned, "and another one might be going." —*PTI*

The 7th bilateral meeting took place between US President Donald Trump and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House —*ANI*

India, Japan, S Korea to buy US coal: Don

Trump said the trade deals with Japan, South Korea, and India, have led to a dramatic increase in US coal exports. The deals, Trump said, would "increase our coal exports dramatically... We're now exporting coal all over the world, and the quality of our coal is supposed to be...the finest anywhere in the world". This comes after the US and India signed an interim trade deal on Friday, as Washington claimed that New Delhi would cut its purchases of Russian oil.

China is costing Peru's sovereignty: US on mega-port

LIMA, 12 FEB

The Trump administration on Wednesday claimed that China was costing Peru its sovereignty by solidifying control over the nation's critical infrastructure. The USD 1.3 billion deepwater port in Chancay has become a symbol of China's foothold in Latin America.

The Chinese government on Thursday strongly rejected the US comments and strongly deplores the US' rumour-mongering and smearing of Chancay," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian in Beijing.

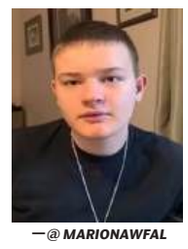
Chancay, on the Pacific coast, is part of China's Belt and Road initiative, under which they fund overseas infrastructure projects—an approach critics say has left countries indebted to Beijing.

The US State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs said that Peru would be "powerless to oversee its infrastructure" and "cheap Chinese money costs sovereignty". —*PTI*

This grab from video shows students exiting the Tumbler Ridge school after deadly shootings in British Columbia, Canada—*PTI*

18-year-old named as Canada school shooter

VANCOUVER, 12 FEB



—@MARIONAWFAL

Police have identified a suspect in the Canadian school shooting as an 18-year-old who with a history of mental health issues. The suspect, **Jesse Van Rootselaar**, allegedly died by suicide after killing nine people in British Colombia, Canada.

At least 25 people were also wounded on Tuesday in Tumbler Ridge School, including two with fatal injuries.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald said Rootselaar has a history of making mental health calls to the police.

The suspect's mother and stepbrother were also found dead in a home near the school. Rootselaar is reported to be a transwoman. She transitioned nearly six years ago. British Columbia Premier David Eby said that police reached the school within two minutes.

The shooting is Canada's deadliest rampage since 2020, when a gunman in Nova Scotia killed 13 people and set fires that left another nine people dead.

School shootings are rare in Canada, which has strict gun-control laws. —*PTI*

Russia launched missiles and drones at Ukraine on Thursday, hitting energy infrastructure in Kyiv, Odesa and Dnipro —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

Russian govt attempting to block WhatsApp: Meta

KYIV/ MOSCOW, 12 FEB

Meta-owned WhatsApp announced on Thursday that Russia is attempting to block the app, a move aimed at forcing over 100 million users towards 'Max', a state-endorsed surveillance app. WhatsApp described the restriction as a "backwards step" for secure communication.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated the ban could be lifted if Meta complies with Russian law. This follows a broader crackdown since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which has already hit Facebook and Instagram.

The WhatsApp ban follows claims by Telegram founder Pavel Durov on Wednesday. Durov said Russia was restricting access to Telegram to push users toward a state-controlled platform, calling it an authoritarian move aimed at surveillance and censorship.

Meanwhile, Russia launched a barrage of ballistic missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities on Thursday night, hitting the energy grid in Kyiv, Odesa, and Dnipro. The escalation comes as Moscow hesitates over US-proposed peace talks slated for next week in Miami or Abu Dhabi. —*Agencies*

Kim's daughter to be named his successor: S Korea spy agency

SEOUL, 12 FEB

South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) told lawmakers on Thursday that Kim Jong Un's teenage daughter is likely his successor, extending the dynasty to a fourth generation.

The intelligence comes as North Korea prepares to hold its biggest political conference later this month. NIS will monitor if Kim's daughter, believed to be named **Kim Ju Ae**, 13, attends the Workers' Party Congress.

Ju Ae first appeared publicly at a 2022 missile test and has since accompanied her father to events like China's military parade in Beijing last September. Jong Un allegedly has two other children.

MARTIAL LAW CASE

South Korea's former interior minister Lee Sang-min was sentenced to seven years in prison for abetting then-president Yoon Suk Yeol's brief declaration of martial law in 2024. —*PTI*

20% DROP IN SALES

China's automotive sales fall as EV makers go global

HONG KONG, 12 FEB

China's new-energy vehicle sales, including EVs and hybrids, fell 20 per cent in January 2026 to 596,000 units.

Meanwhile, a fierce automotive price war following a 19.5 per cent plunge in January sales. This decline, the sharpest since February 2024, has left the industry reeling.

The domestic market's fierce price war has cost an estimated 471 billion yuan (USD 68 billion) in lost output value, since 2023.

Accordingly, the State Administration for Market Regulation issued new guidelines to avoid "predatory pricing" by prohibiting automakers from pricing vehicles below cost to eliminate rivals or attempt to monopolise the market.

Weakened demand, by cash-strapped consumers, has been compounded by reduced EV (electric vehicle) tax breaks and uncertainty over trade-in subsidies after some regions phased them out.

BYD, which recently overtook Tesla as the world's top EV manufacturer, has set a target of 1.3 million overseas sales for 2026. Amid weak local demand, BYD and its rivals are pivoting toward Europe and Latin America.

Turning a local economic crisis into a global competitive challenge for Western automakers.

Analysts at Citi expect China's car exports could jump 19 per cent this year driven by exports of EVs and plug-in hybrids.

Last month, Canada agreed to cut its 100 per cent tariff on China-made EV imports, a move welcomed by Chinese carmakers. China also recently reached a deal with the European Union that could allow more of its EVs to enter the European market. —*PTI*

Faced with domestic oversupply and fierce local competition Chinese automakers are pivoting toward Europe and Latin America —*FREEPIK*

Rupee rises 17P to 90.61 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

The rupee appreciated 17 paise to settle for the day at 90.61 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as foreign fund investments lifted investor sentiments. Foreign fund inflows provided a psychological anchor. Moreover, the RBI has been quietly ensuring that liquidity remains abundant in the banking system, they said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.55 against the US dollar, and touched an intraday high of 90.40 and a low of 90.65 during the day. At the end of the trading session, the domestic unit was quoted at 90.61 (provisional), higher by 17 paise over its previous close. Fresh concerns have emerged over the fact sheet on the US trade deal. —*PTI*

— ANI

Gold falls to Rs 1.6L/10g, silver at Rs 1.6L/kg

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Gold prices fell by Rs 400 to Rs 1.6 lakh per 10 grams on Thursday amid weak global trends and receding expectations of an interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity declined Rs 400, or 0.25 per cent, to Rs 1,60,900 per 10 grams. However, silver prices remained unchanged at Rs 2,68,500 per kilogram in the local bullion market. In the global market, spot gold slipped USD 22.07, or 0.43 per cent, to USD 5,062.46 per ounce while silver was trading nearly 2 per cent lower at USD 82.84 per ounce. According to Kotak Securities silver remains highly volatile with recent price swings. —*PTI*

USV acquires 79% stake in Wellbeing Nutrition

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

USV, a pharmaceutical and biotechnology company, will acquire a 79 per cent stake in Wellbeing Nutrition at a valuation of Rs 1,583 crore, marking the largest exit in India's health and wellness start up sector to date. The acquisition involves 35 per cent from founder Avnish Chhabria and 44 per cent from existing shareholders, while early investors Fireside Ventures and Hindustan Unilever will divest their combined 40 per cent stake in Nutritional Pvt Ltd, which owns Wellbeing Nutrition. The move expands USV's portfolio from diabetes and cardiac care into consumer wellness. "This reinforces USV's evolution into a comprehensive healthcare powerhouse," the company said. Wellbeing Nutrition has an omnichannel presence in over 6,000 outlets and international markets. —*PTI*

Godfrey Philips MD summoned in assault case

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

A Delhi court has summoned MD of Godfrey Philips India, Bina Modi and senior advocate Lalit Bhasin in the alleged assault of Godfrey Philips India executive director Samir Modi during a board meeting in 2024. The court took cognisance of offences under Section 210 of the BNSS and issued summons to the two, along with Bina Modi's security officer Surendra Prasad, who is accused of physically assaulting Samir Modi. Police had filed a chargesheet against Prasad, citing prima facie evidence, but found insufficient material against Bina Modi and Bhasin. Samir subsequently filed a protest petition. According to the complaint, Prasad stopped him from entering the boardroom on Bina's instructions and assaulted him, allegedly fracturing his right index finger. —*PTI*

IndiGo, Air India seek easing of cabin crew fatigue rules

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), which represents IndiGo, Air India, and SpiceJet, has urged the government to ease parts of proposed cabin crew fatigue regulations, warning that strict implementation could disrupt flight schedules, raise costs, and limit long-term growth, Reuters reported.

The draft rules, proposed in October, aim to improve operational safety by increasing the minimum weekly rest period for cabin crew from 36 to 48 hours, expanding night operation limits, and mandating single-room accommodation during layovers. While separate rooms are common internationally, making them compulsory in India could create logistical challenges at some airports and increase operational expenses. In a private letter to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the FIA highlighted that the rules could make crew scheduling more complex, reduce roster predictability, and hinder Indian airlines' competitiveness in the global market. It also noted that some provisions exceed international standards for example, classifying ultra-long-haul flights as over 14 hours, compared with the global norm of 16 hours. The body has requested phased implementation and a review of night landing caps to align with fatigue science.

The issue follows the crash of Air India Flight 171 in Ahmedabad, reported by Italian media as caused by an "intentional act" rather than a technical fault. Airlines are under operational pressures: Air India faces losses from Pakistan's airspace ban, while IndiGo faced regulatory scrutiny. —*Agencies*

Adani Power enters nuclear power sector with new unit

Adani Atomic Energy incorporated with Rs 5L share capital

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Adani Power has incorporated a new wholly owned subsidiary, Adani Atomic Energy, marking its formal entry into the nuclear energy space.

The development follows the Indian government's decision to privatize the country's nuclear power sector.

Adani Atomic Energy has been incorporated with an authorised share capital of Rs 5,00,000, divided into 50,000 equity shares of Rs 10 each.

The investment has been made in cash, with Adani Power holding complete ownership and control of the company.

As a wholly owned arm, Adani Atomic Energy will also be classified as a related party of the listed company, Adani Power under regulatory norms.

Adani Power in its Q3FY26 posted a 15 per cent year-on-year drop in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,488 crore.

The company said that the increase in profit was mainly due to lower one-time income. "Consolidated profit after tax for Q3 FY26 was at Rs 2,488 crore, mainly due to lower one-time prior period income," a company said.

Total revenue for Q3 FY26 stood at Rs 12,717 crore vs Rs 13,434 crore in Q3 FY25, despite lower rates and lower other income, it said.

Consolidated power sale volume of 23.6 billion units (BUs) in Q3 FY26 was against 23.3 BUs in Q3 FY25, despite demand disruptions due to early and prolonged monsoon.

As a wholly owned arm, Adani Atomic Energy will also be classified as a related party of the listed company, Adani Power under regulatory norms —*ADANI.COM*

During the reporting quarter, the company received a new long-term power purchase agreement award of 3,200 MW from Assam power discom.

S B Khyalia, CEO of Adani Power, said, "We are swiftly securing long-term power purchase agreements for our upcoming capacities, with nearly half of our 23.7 GW expansion already tied up in PPAs with state discoms. Our project execution is progressing very well, by meeting or exceeding our targets." —*PTI*

TCS STOCKS DIP

Sensex falls 558 pt on IT shares sell-off

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

Benchmark BSE Sensex fell 558 points on Thursday amid heavy selling in IT shares, as concerns over AI-led disruptions and waning hopes of a Fed rate cut after firm US economic data weighed on investor sentiment.

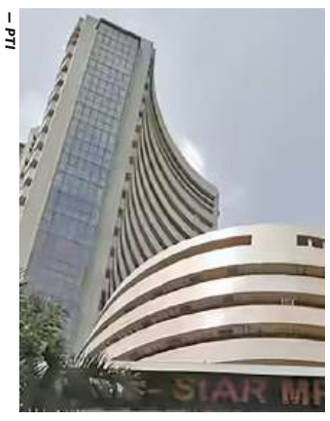
The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 558.72 points, or 0.66 per cent, to settle at 83,674.92. During the day, it tanked 716.97 points, or 0.85 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 83,516.67.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 146.65 points, or 0.57 per cent, to end at 25,807.20.

Technology stocks led the slide, with Tech Mahindra, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbling nearly 6 per cent each to emerge as major laggards on the Sensex.

HCL Technologies, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Eternal, HDFC Bank, IndiGo, Kotak Mahindra Bank, and Adani Ports also ended in the red.

Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Trent, Bharat Electronics Ltd, State Bank of India, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel and Tata Steel were among the gainers.



— PTI

BSE MidCap Select Index fell 0.48 per cent, while SmallCap Select Index slipped 0.28 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Focussed IT slumped the most by 5.40 per cent, followed by IT by 5.29 per cent.

European markets are trading higher in mid-session deals. US equities ended lower on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 943.81 on Wednesday, while domestic institutional investors were the net sellers of stocks worth Rs 125.36 crore. —*PTI*

US trade deal: India to get zero duty access on textiles

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India will get concessional duty access for garments made using American yarn and cotton, similar to the benefits provided to Bangladesh, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

The United States will reduce reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi goods to 19 per cent, but garments attract zero duty only if made with US cotton and man-made fibres. A Bangladeshi garment now faces a 31 per cent levy (12 per cent for most favoured nation plus 19 per cent reciprocal), and if it uses US fibres, then duty falls to 12 per cent.

If an Indian company procures yarn and cotton forward from US, produces garments and re-exports them, they will have duty free access in US —*AI*

If an Indian company procures yarn forward and cotton forward from the US, manufactures garments, and re-exports to the US, those garments will receive duty-free access in America. It will not have any impact on Indian cotton farmers.

The US exports are only USD 5 million, and for India, the target is USD 50 billion, Goel said.India and the US have finalised a framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement to be implemented in March.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had termed the India-US interim trade deal as a "wholesale surrender." —*PTI*

HUL Q3 profit soars to Rs 6,603 cr

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) on Thursday reported a more than two-fold rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 6,603 crore for the December quarter of FY26, compared with Rs 2,989 crore a year earlier, driven largely by a one-off gain from the demerger of its ice cream business to Kwality Wall's (India) Ltd.

The company said reported Profit after Tax grew 121 per cent year-on-year due to the accounting impact of the demerger. Excluding exceptional items, profit stood at Rs 2,562 crore, up 1 per cent.

HUL also recorded a loss of Rs 576 crore related to the implementation of new Labour Codes. Revenue from sales rose 5.7 per cent to Rs 16,197 crore. Total income increased 5 per cent to Rs 16,580 crore. —*PTI*

16 hrs online not addiction: Insta boss

LOS ANGELES, 12 FEB

Adam Mosseri, head of Meta's Instagram, testified during a social media trial in Los Angeles that he disagrees that people can be clinically addicted to social media platforms.

The plaintiffs held social media companies responsible for harms to children who use their platforms. Meta Platforms and Google's YouTube are the two remaining defendants in the case, which TikTok and Snap have settled.

The lawsuit by a 20-year-old identified only by the initials KGM, could determine how thousands of similar lawsuits against social media companies would play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials.

Mosseri said on Wednesday that it's important to differentiate between clinical addiction and what he called problematic use. He said he was not claiming to be a medical expert. —*PTI*

Domestic investors pumped Rs 1.14L cr into AIFs: Report

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Domestic investors pumped Rs 1.14 lakh crore into alternative investment fund (AIFs) in 18 months, with the industry building a locally-anchored capital base, a report by Crisil said.

Domestic investors accounted for 55.3 per cent of category I and II AIF capital in September 2025, up from 50.3 per cent in March 2024, with an incremental inflow of Rs 1.14 lakh crore over the period intervening, the report added.

Cumulative AIF commitments across categories I, II and III reached Rs 15.05 lakh crore as of September 2025, clocking a compound annual growth rate of 30.7 per cent between fiscal 2021 and the first half of fiscal 2026, it highlighted.As of March 2025, 80 per cent of benchmarked equity AIF schemes made distributions, around 25 per cent returned full paid-in capital and top quartile funds made over 2 times distributions to paid-in capital or DPI. —*PTI*

Rolls-Royce to make next-gen combat jet engines in India

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

British defence major Rolls-Royce on Thursday announced plans to co-develop a next-generation combat jet engine in India. This is a day after CEO Tufan Erginbilgic met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The proposed engine is expected to power jets under India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme. Rolls-Royce aims to make India its third "home market" outside the UK and could more than double its workforce to around 10,000, alongside a tenfold increase in local supply chain sourcing.

Erginbilgic said the company would expand its ecosystem across defence, aviation and energy, supporting India's 'Viksit Bharat' and Atmanirbhar goals. Opportunities under exploration include localised engine manufacturing for the Army, Navy and Coast Guard, naval propulsion, land systems and power solutions for critical infrastructure.

Rolls-Royce engines already power over 1,400 Indian platforms, including Jaguar and Hawk aircraft, Arjun tanks, and naval vessels. —*PTI*

Rolls-Royce CEO Tufan Erginbilgic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rolls Royce India vice president Sashi Mukundan in New Delhi —*PTI*

Veg thali cheaper by 1%, non-veg 7% in January: Crisil

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

The cost of home-cooked vegetarian and non-vegetarian thalis declined 1 per cent and 7 per cent year-on-year, respectively, amid benign commodity prices in January, Crisil Intelligence said.

The decline in the cost of a veg thali was driven by a sharp fall in the prices of onion, potato, and pulses, while elevated tomato prices limited the decline.

According to the 'Roti Rice Rate' report, about 39 per cent lower crop arrivals in January led to a 50 per cent rise in tomato prices on a low base of last year to Rs 46/kg in January 2026.

While onion prices fell 27 per cent, potato prices fell 23 per cent.

Prices of pulses declined 14 per cent because of increased stocks, led by higher imports of Bengal yellow pea and black gram. Vegetable oil prices surged 4 per cent year-on-year.

The cost of a non-veg thali fell by an estimated 13 per cent on-year due to a 13 per cent drop in broiler prices--which account for 50 per cent of the cost--on a high base. —*PTI*

LINKING START-UPS & INVESTORS

NVIDIA, Google, OpenAI among 400 exhibitors at AI expo

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

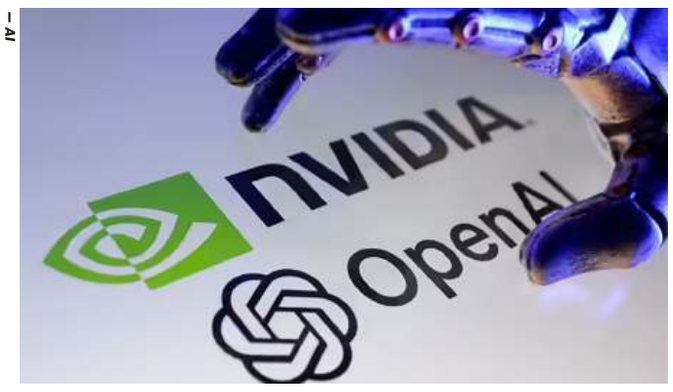
Dominant AI ecosystem players Nvidia, Google and OpenAI are among 400 exhibitors who will participate at the five-day-long India AI Impact Expo 2026.

Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), director general, Arvind Kumar said that the expo will serve as a matchmaking for AI ecosystem players, where Indian innovators will also showcase their potential.

Kumar said over 100 countries have confirmed participation in the summit, which includes 50 ministerial-level delegations.

He said that the preparation for the India AI Impact Summit and Expo started immediately after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the hosting of the next AI summit in India.

"We have started work on the expo. The entire summit, comprising the expo, will be held between 16 to 20 February.



— AI

Almost all the technology companies in the country are participating in this. Many government departments and ministries will also participate in it," he said.

The expo will be held in an area of about 75,000 square metres in Pragati Maidan.

Kumar said the expo will also host sessions to connect start-ups with investors.

Around 700 sessions are planned during five days for discussion on AI and its impact.

The India AI Impact Summit will figure around three core pillars -- People, Planet and Progress and discussions will focus on employment and skilling, sustainable and energy-efficient AI, and economic and social development. It has seven thematic working groups, co-chaired by representatives from the Global North and Global South. —*PTI*

Islanders secure thumping 105-run win over Oman

Mosca brothers lead Italy to 10-wicket win vs Nepal

PALLEKELE, 12 FEB

Blazing fifties by Pavan Rathnayake and skipper Dasun Shanaka, along with Kusal Mendis' assured half-century, helped Sri Lanka register a statement 105-run win over Oman in their T20 World Cup Group B clash, here on Thursday.

Rathnayake (60 from 28 balls) and skipper Dasun Shanaka (50; 20b) returned to form, while Kusal (61; 45b) anchored the innings with successive World Cup half-centuries as Sri Lanka piled up 225/5 their second highest in T20 World Cup and the highest score of this tournament so far after Oman opted to bowl.

Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake -PTI

Oman's chase never quite recovered from early setbacks as they wilted under scoreboard pressure to be restricted to 120/9.

Theekshana triggered the collapse by dismissing the fluent-looking Wasim for 27 (20 balls; 3x6), caught by Kusal.A direct hit from Kamil Mishara at the deep point ran out Vinayak Shukla the very next ball, and Jiten Ramanandi was brilliantly stumped by Kusal for a golden duck. Mohammad Nadeem, back after missing the opener, waged a lone battle with a valiant fifty, as the 43-year-old hit his third T20I fifty in 71 appearances.

Sri Lanka 225 for 5 (Mendis 61, Rathnayake 60, Shanaka 50, Ramanandi 2-41) beat Oman 120 for 9 (Mohammad Nadeem 53*, Theekshana 2-11, Chameera 2-19) by 105 runs

Brothers **Justin and Anthony Mosca** produced a polished performance to script an upset of sorts as debutants Italy thrashed Nepal by 10 wickets to notch their maiden T20 World Cup win here on Thursday. Justin struck an unbeaten 60 off 44 balls, while Anthony contributed 62 not out from 32 deliveries, the duo stitching together a match-winning run partnership as Italy overhauled the opponents' score of 123 in just 12.4 overs. Earlier, Italy's spinners delivered a disciplined performance, maintaining tight lines and lengths to dismiss Nepal for 123 in 19.3 overs. Their bowlers, especially spinners Ben Manenti (2/9) and Crishan Kalugamage (3/18), applied the brakes effectively, playing a key role in strangling the opposition.

Nepal, which had come close to stunning England in their previous match before eventually losing by four runs, never quite found momentum. They struggled to score freely and lost wickets at regular intervals, preventing them from building any substantial partnerships.

Brief scores:

Nepal 123 all out in 19.3 overs (Rohit Paudel 23, Aarif Sheikh 27; Ben Manenti 2/9, Crishan Kalugamage 3/18).

Italy 124 for no loss in 12.4 overs (Justin Mosca 60 not out, Anthony Mosca 62 not out). *—PTI*

Italy's Justin Mosca and Anthony Mosca during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 -PTI

BCB chief Aminul Islam to be in Colombo

Bangladesh Cricket Board chief Aminul Islam onThursday says he will be in Colombo towatch the India-Pakistan T20 World Cup clash on Sunday, where he expects tobreak the ice with the BCCI after tense exchanges over the past few weeks. Speaking tothe Bangladesh newspaper 'Pratham Alo', Islam said the invitation for thehigh-profile game has come from the ICC."The ICChas taken a decision. The major stakeholders of the ICC are these five Asiancountries, and for the India-Pakistan World Cup match on the 15th

SHANE WARNE WAS A BIG INFLUENCE ON MY CAREER: MANENTI

MUMBAI, 12 FEB

Spinner Ben Manenti, a key architect of Italy's maiden T20 World Cup win over Nepal on Thursday, credited the influence of the late Shane Warne on his career while growing up in Australia.

Having spent a lot of time playing domestic cricket Down Under, the 28-year-old Manenti returned a splendid 4-0-9-2 as Italy bowled out Nepal for a mere 123 en route to their 10-wicket victory here at the Wankhede Stadium.

"Obviously, growing up in Australia (and) watching Shane Warne bowl, he was a hero for all spinners. He was probably a big influence on my career, and I got a lot of coaches back home that have helped me out as well," Manenti told the media here after Italy's historic win. Manenti, along with Crishan Kalugamage (3/18) and JJ Smuts (1/22), strangulated the Nepal batters who just could not come up with a counter-attack to their testing line and lengths."

I've played a lot of T20 cricket now. I've bowled the first over a lot of times. There's a job I'm used to, a job I've done before, so I wasn't too nervous, but it's nice to get the team off to a good start," he said." *—PTI*

ICC T20 WC MATCHES TOMMORROW

Mitchell Marsh -PTI

Marsh's fitness a worry as Australia eye win over Zimbabwe

Skipper Mitchell Marsh's fitness will be watched closely as an injury-hit Australia try to ward off a tricky Zimbabwe and move closer to the Super Eights in a Group B match of the T20 World Cup here on Friday ***11 am***. Marsh missed his side's big win over Ireland on Wednesday with an internal testicular bleeding and, according to Cricket Australia, the all-rounder will require a considerable period of rest before returning to action.Steve Smith has joined the squad as his cover, but the absence of Marsh did not feel in Australia's 67-run romp here as they produced an all-round effort against the Irish.

Associate rivals Canada, UAE aim to bounce back after heavy losses

Bogged down by heavy opening losses, Canada and the UAE will be eager to make amends when they meet in a Group D clash of the T20 World Cup here on ***Friday 3 pm***. Drawn into the "Group of Death" alongside three top-10 teams, New Zealand, South Africa, and Afghanistan, the UAE and Canada face a daunting, unlikely task: making it to the Super Eight stage.Their campaigns got off to disappointing starts, with both sides suffering massive defeats. While Canada, which dominated the Americas Regional Final by winning all six matches

Netherlands look to stay alive; USA seek revival

Netherlands will look to blend batting explosiveness and bowling discipline for a victory against the dangerous United States of America, essential to keep their T20 World Cup Super Eights hopes alive during a Group A match here on ***Friday 7 pm***. Having lost their tournament-opener against Pakistan narrowly, the Dutch bounced back in commanding fashion against Namibia in their previous outing. Chasing 157, they sealed a seven-wicket win with two overs to spare to stay in contention for a berth in the next stage. All-rounder Bas de Leede will be central to their campaign.

-PTI

Asian C'ship: Tomar leads India's clean sweep

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

World championship silver medallist Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar beat teammate Niraj Kumar to clinch gold with a world record, as India swept the podium in the 50m rifle 3-positions event on the penultimate day of the Asian Championship here on Thursday.Aishwary, who signed off 2025 on a high by clinching Asian Championship gold in Kazakhstan along with silver medals at the World Championships and the World Cup Finals, carried that momentum into the new year.He fired a world record score of 362 to edge Niraj by a margin of just 0.2 points.—*PTI*

-PTI

Lionel Messi has a strained left hamstring

FORT LAUDERDALE, 12 FEB

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi has a strained left hamstring, an injury that could call into some doubt his availability for the reigning MLS Cup champions' regular-season opener at LAFC on 21 Feb. The team announced the injury on Wednesday. Messi, MLS's back-to-back reigning MVP, scored a goal in a preseason game in Ecuador last weekend but was subbed out about 12 minutes into the second half presumably because of the hamstring issue. "His gradual return to training will depend on his clinical and functional progress in the coming days," Inter Miami said in a statement. The injury also means that what was supposed to be Inter Miami's preseason finale will now be played about a week after its MLS opener. Inter Miami will face Ecuadorian club Independiente del Valle at Bayamon.—*PTI*

Poonacha-Isaro through to semis, Nagal bows out

CHENNAI, 12 FEB

Former champion Sumit Nagal bowed out of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger with a 6-4, 6-7, 3-6 loss to Russian Petr Bar Biryukov in the second round here on Thursday.

The India No. 1 won the first set against big-serving left-hander Biryukov, ranked No. 305 in the world.Nagal also had three break points in the second set on Biryukov's serve, but failed to convert them.With no breaks of serve, the set went into a tie-break, which Biryukov won before taking a 3-0 lead in the decider.

Although Nagal fought back to level the final set at 3-3, Biryukov earned another decisive break in the eighth game and held serve to close out the game in two hours and six minutes.

In the longest match of the day, fourth seed Ilia Simakin overcame Australia's Philip Sekulic 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1) in just under three hours. Simakin will next face Biryukov for a spot in the semi-finals.

Earlier in the day, Indian qualifier Sidharth Rawat, ranked No. 715 in the world, was defeated by Maks Kasnikowski, ranked No. 419, in straight sets. The Pole advanced to the last eight with a 6-2, 6-3 win.In the doubles draw, top seeds Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha/ Pruchya Isaro advanced to the last four with a 6-4, 6-1 win over wildcard duo Lohithaksha Bathrinath/ Abhinav Sanjeev Shanmugam. *—PTI*

Humpy set to return to Norway Chess Women's tournament

STAVANGER, 12 FEB

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy is set for her third outing at the prestigious Norway Chess Women's tournament, scheduled to be held from 25 May to 5 June.

A two-time world rapid champion, the 38-year-old Humpy is among the three Indian women who have qualified for the Candidates Tournament to decide the challenger for the world championship later this year. "I'm really happy to be part of Norway Chess Women. It's a tournament I've always enjoyed, not only because of the high level of competition but also the warm atmosphere and excellent organization. *—PTI*

AFC U-17 ASIAN CUP

India draws with Uzbekistan

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

India were drawn with Uzbekistan, Australia, and North Korea in Group D of the 2026 AFC U-17 Asian Cup in the final draw held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

The tournament will take place from May 5 to 22 in Saudi Arabia. India qualified for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup for the 10th time in history after finishing ahead of Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, and Chinese Taipei in the qualifiers.

The Blue Colts will begin their campaign against Australia, followed by Uzbekistan and Korea.

Uzbekistan is the defending champion, qualifying automatically for the tournament. Australia was knocked out in the group stage of the 2025 edition and qualified for the 2026 tournament after victories over Jordan, Bhutan, and the Philippines.

Two-time former champions North Korea were semi-finalists in 2025, thus also qualifying automatically for the current edition.

In Group A, hosts Saudi Arabia were drawn alongside Tajikistan, Thailand, and Myanmar. *—PTI*

Tvesa Malik ends winless run

PUNE, 12 FEB

Tvesa Malik ended a winless run going back to more than two years as she emerged triumphant in a play-off against Anvitha Narender in the third leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Thursday.

Tvesa, who began the final day one shot behind Anvitha, drew level on the fourth hole despite carding a bogey, as Anvitha faltered with a double bogey there. Anvitha then dropped further shots on the sixth and eighth holes before recovering with a birdie on the ninth at the Oxford Golf Resort.

The back nine turned into a see-saw battle with the lead changing hands more than once. Tvesa, who held a one-shot advantage at the turn, stretched it to two with a birdie on the 11th. However, a double bogey on the 12th brought the contest back on level terms.

Anvitha showed admirable resilience, bouncing back from a bogey on the 13th with birdies on the 15th and 16th. Tvesa, too, birdied the 15th to keep herself in contention as the duel went down to the closing stretch. *—PTI*

Afghanistan players withdraw from PSL auction

KARACHI, 12 FEB

The Afghanistan players withdrew their names from the first-ever Players' auction held ahead of the 11th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).A franchise owner confirmed initially that players like Mujeeb ur Rehman, Seddiqullah Atal, Muhamad Nabi, Waqar Salamkheil, and Fazal Haq Farooqi had registered for the auction held in Lahore on Wednesday.

But they withdrew their names following the backlash over the direct signing of Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz by Peshawar Zalmi.

However, Salman Naseer, the CEO of the PSL, said there were some players from Afghanistan who were on the roll, but no franchise picked them.

"There were a few Afghan players in the auction, but no franchise went for them," Naseer claimed.But Naseer said the strained relations between the two nationswere reflected in the auction."There was a severe backlash after Zalmi signed Gurbaz because of the fractured relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and afterGurbaz pulled himself out of the PSL. *—PTI*

PAKISTAN'S HOCKEY PLAYERS SPEND HOURS ON ROAD

CANBERRA, 12 FEB

The players of the Pakistan hockey team were forced to spend several hours on the road upon reaching Canberra, as their hotel bookings in the Australian capital were cancelled after the Pakistan Hockey Federation failed to pay the bill due to a lack of funds.They are in Australia for the second leg of the FIH Pro League event in Hobart.

According to sources close to the team, the players and team officials were left with no option but to "roam on the roads" before finding accommodation."

Apparently, the players and officials were booked in a four-star hotel in Canberra and were told that the Pakistan Sports Board and Pakistan Hockey Federation had made all upfront payments for their stay in Canberra," a source said on Thursday."

But when they reached Canberra last week, they found no bookings for them at the designated hotel. The team's head coach, Tahir Zaman, faced problems getting in touch with PSB and PHF officials back home because of the time difference," he added."Tahir messaged them about the awkward situation the players were facing and had no place to stay and rest after a long journey from Lahore," the source said.

The incident has been seen as a major source of embarrassment for Pakistan's national sport. *—PTI*

Shah helped us building cricket stadium: Rudie van

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Namibia will be hosting the men's ODI World Cup games in 2027, and a lot of credit for constructing a brand new stadium goes to ICC chairman Jay Shah, Cricket Namibia president Rudie van Vuuren said on Thursday.

Van Vuuren was all praise for Shah for his efforts in empowering associate nations and improving their cricket infrastructure.

The ICC has adopted a policy of empowering associate members. Jay Shah has really brought significant change there. He was in Windhoek visiting our new stadium, and how the ICC has helped us develop that facility. *—PTI*

BELOW-PAR PERFORMANCE AND DOPING

1342 athletes dropped from Khelo India: Mandaviya

NEW DELHI, 12 FEB

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday revealed that 1342 athletes in various disciplines have been weeded out of the Khelo India programme in the last three years for not measuring up in performance and doping violations.

In his reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha seeking details of the performance of the athletes enrolled on the programme, the minister stated 2905 fresh names have been inducted into the flagship scheme during the same period.

"A total of 1,342 athletes have exited the programme during the last three years due to performance below the prescribed benchmarks and involvement in doping violations," stated the reply from the minister.

"performance benchmarks are revised annually and are updated on the Khelo India website from time to timeAthlete performance is mapped and measured annually as per the prescribed protocols and in assessment camps," said the minister.

Over 23,000 athletes are being trained and supported across the nation under the Khelo India programme. A Talent Identification and Development Committee (TIDC) of the ministry handles the induction and exit of athletes from the programme through an established protocol that includes performance assessment camps.

Khelo India was launched in 2017 to identify and nurture sporting talent at the grassroots level, and double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker is one of the most prominent beneficiaries of the scheme.

It gets a massive share in the annual sports budget, and the allocation for the financial year 2026-27 has been kept at Rs 924.35 crore.

Responding to a query on the measures to anti-doping enforcement through investigative and intelligence-gathering mechanisms. *—PTI*